



COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM

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FOR CLUBS



COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM

We want to thank you in advance for playing your vital part in helping our great game get going again. By observing Government guidance and the football-specific protocols, let's work together to ensure the transition back to enjoying football is as smooth and safe as possible. Please note that there is no material impact on the playing of National League System football at this time. We will continue to provide updates if required going forward.

This guidance has been updated on **JANUARY 27th 2022** to reflect the Government's removal of Plan B restrictions which were put in place in December 2021, in response to the risks of the Omicron variant. While the Government have removed all restrictions, they are still encouraging caution in certain situations.

It is important that all participants remain vigilant and continue to follow FA and Government guidance. The latest changes are summarised below.

- **From 17th January:** It is possible to end self-isolation after five full days if you have two negative Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) taken on consecutive days. The first LFT should not be taken before the fifth day after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms). The self-isolation period remains 10 full days for those without negative results from two LFTs taken a day apart.
 - Government guidance on staying at home for households with possible or confirmed Covid-19 is [here](#).
- **From 27th January:**
 - Venues and events will no longer be required by law to check visitors' NHS Covid Pass. The NHS Covid Pass can still be used on a voluntary basis.
 - There is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering. However, the Government suggests that you continue to wear a face mask in crowded or enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with people you do not normally meet.
- **On travel:**
 - All participants may travel to games with no restrictions in place for domestic travel.
 - Government advice on requirements for international arrivals must be followed. More detail can be found [here](#). This means you cannot play football until you receive a negative test or complete your isolation period.
- **The FA continues to work closely with Government to monitor the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and will update this document with any further changes, as and when necessary.**

The other FA Covid-19 guidance notes are below, which you'll find [here](#):

- Covid-19: Guidance for Grassroots Football
- Covid-19: Guidance for The Women's Football Pyramid, Tiers 3-6
- Covid-19: First-Aid Guidance for Grassroots Football
- Covid-19: Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance

COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM (CONTINUED)

DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM FOOTBALL

ADAPTATIONS TO THE GAME

In previous FA guidance, we set out the required adaptations to the playing of the game, to align to the Government's team sports framework. This included not prolonging elements of the game where players will be in close proximity (i.e. free kicks and corners) and avoiding team huddles and handshakes (for example).

These adaptations are no longer required by the Government and so have been removed from this guidance. However, clubs, leagues and all participants should remain vigilant and, for example, be respectful of individuals/teams who may not wish to shake hands before games.

CLOSE CONTACT AND SELF-ISOLATION

If you have Covid-19 **symptoms** you should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. You should **arrange to have a PCR test** as soon as possible. If this PCR test result is positive, you must continue to self-isolate.

If you live with or have been in contact with someone with Covid-19, you will not need to self-isolate if any of the following apply:

- You're fully vaccinated – this means 14 days have passed since your final dose of an approved Covid-19 vaccine;
- You're under 18 years old;
- You're taking part or have taken part in an approved Covid-19 vaccine trial;
- You're not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

From 17th January: It is possible to end self-isolation after five full days if you have two negative Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs) taken on consecutive days. The first LFT should not be taken before the fifth day after your symptoms started (or the day your test was taken if you did not have symptoms). The self-isolation period remains 10 full days for those without negative results from two LFTs taken a day apart.

Even if you do not have symptoms, you're strongly advised to:

- Do daily rapid LFTs (one a day for seven days), if you're fully vaccinated, to protect yourself and others from Covid-19 – **[find out more about daily testing on GOV.UK](#)**
- Follow advice on **[how to avoid catching and spreading Covid-19](#)**
- Consider limiting contact with **[people who are at higher risk from COVID-19](#)**

MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

From 27th January: There is no longer a legal requirement to wear a face covering. Government advice is that the use of masks reduce risks to people, both yourselves and those around you. The government suggests that you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces where you may come into contact with other people you do not normally meet.

Please note you do not need to wear a mask when playing football, including indoors.

CAPACITY

All businesses and facilities remain able to open, with no limits on capacity (indoors or outdoors).

CHANGING ROOMS

Changing rooms can be used. However, we advise that participants should continue to minimise unnecessary use of changing facilities where possible, to avoid prolonged contact with people in a crowded space.

Clubs and facilities may also wish to consider taking precautions to avoid close contact, for example, ensuring thorough ventilation of close, indoor spaces.

SPECTATORS

There are no limits on spectators for matches in the National League System, this includes parents and carers. All facilities can open without restrictions on capacity.

COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM (CONTINUED)

HOSPITALITY

All outdoor and indoor hospitality are allowed to open without restrictions on capacity limits or how people order food and drink.

KEEPING YOUR CLUBHOUSE AND EQUIPMENT CLEAN

Keeping your clubhouse clean will reduce the risk of passing the infection onto other people. To achieve this, your cleaning procedures should be thorough and rigorous. A cleaning schedule could include:

- Daily cleaning throughout the clubhouse and facility;
- Identifying high-contact touch points for more regular cleaning (e.g. door handles, grab rails, vending machines);
- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between use;
- Cleaning of shared training equipment after each individual use;
- Having waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection;
- Removing any non-essential items that may be difficult to clean.

The FA is working with its recently-appointed official hygiene partner, Dettol, to support the grassroots game.

LATERAL FLOW TESTS

If any of the following apply to you, you can order LFTs [here](#):

- You do not have Covid-19 symptoms;
- You're 11 or older;
- You have not been told to self-isolate;
- You cannot get tests from your work, school, college or university

FIRST AID

All participants should ensure they have read the updated FA guidance on First Aid.

TRAVEL

All participants may travel to games with no restrictions in place for domestic travel. Participants should be aware that travelling in cars is permitted, however this does mean that

they will likely be in close contact and should manage any risks linked to this. Any international travel should be in line with Government advice. Players and clubs should consider how they can reduce the likelihood of close contact occurring.

INSPECTING THE EXISTING CONDITION OF YOUR FACILITY

If parts of your facility have not been used for some time, a thorough building inspection and walk-round will allow you to identify any issues and damage. This will help you plan what work needs to be carried out and should include water quality (e.g. for Legionella and other contaminants), drains, gas services, ventilation, alarms/safety systems and pest control.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The guidance you are reading is FOR ALL – players, coaches, club officials, club welfare officers, match officials, league officials, first-aiders, volunteers, parents/carers, facility providers and spectators.

Clubs and facility providers should update their risk assessment regularly and also update their medical emergency action plan around player care, as well as strictly following the first-aid guidance document published by The FA, without exception. This is both to protect players and any club member who is trying to aid the player if an emergency arises.

Whenever this document refers to finding further information on TheFA.com, you'll find it [here](#).



DISCLAIMER:

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor it is a replacement for such, nor does it replace any Government or UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice; nor does it provide any specific commentary or advice on health-related issues. Affected organisations should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any re-opening plan, as required. Independent legal advice should be sought, as required and depending on your, or relevant circumstances.

While efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication, the reader is reminded to check the Government website to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding social distancing and any other Government measures.



FOR ALL

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