



RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

The following Guidelines are in line with Canada Soccer, BC Soccer, Viasport and the BC Health authorities and have been put into place to keep our members and communities safe and return to the sport we all love.

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Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to provide information, directives and guidance regarding the concerns associated with COVID-19 as we introduce participants back to soccer activities. As the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve, it is imperative that all the MWSL members implement the COVID-19 physical distancing, disinfection and other procedures outlined in this document.

The health and safety for all participants in the soccer community is of utmost importance for the MWSL and this is central to all of our decisions around COVID-19. All involved in our sport must take direction from the appropriate health authorities, including the Public Health Agency of Canada and the BC Ministry of Health.

On May 6, 2020 the Government of B.C. announced [B.C.'s Restart Plan: Next Steps to Move Through the Pandemic1](#) . The goal outlined within this plan “is to slow the spread of COVID-19, protecting our most vulnerable and ensuring our health-care system can respond to increased demand while we develop a vaccine.”

The Emergency Program Act (EPA) authorizes provincial and local levels of government to declare states of emergency and make decisions about community safety. The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture works closely with viaSport BC to provide direction and oversight to the development and delivery of amateur sport in B.C. viaSport BC is a non-profit society that acts as an agent for the Ministry to enable the growth, governance, and stewardship of amateur sport in B.C. viaSport works closely with provincial and national sport partner organizations to align approaches, develop standards and policies, and follow the guidance of health officers to support the safety of sport participants, volunteers, coaches, suppliers, staff, and others within the eco-system. Provincial sport organizations are also independent non-profit societies that work with viaSport BC and their national sport federations to align and set policies and practices for their membership. Each provincial sport organization is overseen by a Board of Directors that approves policies and is responsible for the oversight of the organization. Members of provincial sport organizations are required to follow and implement such policies. During this pandemic, the adherence to, and implementation of, these return to sport policies and practices for all members of provincial sport organizations, including clubs, associations, and individual members, will help promote the safety of our communities. These proactive measures can help preserve community health.

On June 1st viaSport released their [Return to Sports Guidelines for BC](#). To help organizations in their planning, major stakeholders in each sector were asked to create sector-specific guidance documents. viaSport was asked by the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Lisa Beare, to develop this Return To Sport Guidelines document (the “RTS Guidelines”) to support the provincial amateur sport sector in B.C. Prior to restarting, all provincial sport organizations and

their clubs should use this RTS Guidelines to develop their own sport specific Return to Sport plan and work towards careful and gradual restarting within their own communities.

On June 2nd BC Soccer Released their [Return to Play – Phase 1 Plan](#).

Return to Sport and Working timeline

Return to Sport

Sport and physical activity play an important role in the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of citizens in British Columbia. For this and other economic and social reasons we are all eager to resume sport activities. However, the health and safety of all participants and citizens for British Columbia must remain the number one priority.

As with all other activities, Return to Sport will require a gradual, thoughtful, phased approach. The provincial government plans to lift restrictions in phases, while closely monitoring population health patterns to minimize risk to British Columbians. At the time of release, we are in Phase Two with Phase Three following sometime between June and September.

Accordingly, in the short-term, modifications will need to be made to many sport activities in order to ensure that they meet provincial guidelines and are consistent with the limits inherent in Phase Two, and subsequently Phase Three, of the Restart Plan

WORKING TIMELINE

The following timelines are ONLY able to be implemented if the BC health authorities soften restrictions and we are collectively able to get back to some form of soccer activity. Early indication suggests that there may be a softening of restrictions in the near-term, therefore, the following is being shared as we collectively work to prepare accordingly.

- Earliest June 12, 2020 – Return to Modified Training (Phase 1 for soccer)
- Date TBA – Return to Modified Games and/or Competition Structure (Phase 2)
- Date TBA – Return to the NEW Regular Type Training & Games/Competition Structure (Phase 3)

Organizing Soccer Activity

- The activity must always comply with the distancing measures and recommendations, along with any gathering restrictions issued by the provincial government health authorities, including the arrival and departure of players (except for family members or persons residing in the same household).

- As of document date – 6 feet between people and gatherings of 50 people or less (for soccer, unless otherwise stated by the municipality/city, this is 50 people per regular 11v 11 full-size soccer field).
- Clearly layout, communicate, and mark (in consultation with municipality/city/facility owner) player drop-off and pick-up protocol for arrival and departure.
- Limit your activities to small groups, solely to in-Club/organization activity.
- Limit the number of team staff (coaches, managers, etc.) that are on-field, noting the requirement to have a specific number of coaches to lead the session and all while adhering to the Rule of Two.
- Consider the comfort level of all your volunteer coaches under the current situation. Perhaps, in the first instance, limit sessions being led by a select core group of coaches.
- Include the daily requirement for any and all staff/coaches and participants to verbally confirm they are not experiencing any symptoms related to COVID-19.
- Make sure to stagger training session times between different groups to create a buffer between sessions and avoid an overlap of players on the field.
- Limit all occasions for gatherings.
- Communicate all hygiene measures in advance to all your players.
- Participation should be limited to the ages and levels that understand and can adhere to the distancing measures and recommendations issued by the provincial government health authorities.
- Parents and Guardians of U18 and younger players must provide written consent authorizing them to participate in soccer activity.
- Keep a record of participants that are participating and when, so that you can contact them if needed, for example, if an infected person is identified.
- Adhere to Emergency Response and Outbreak Plan (in this document).
- If any organization is looking to operate referee specific training, these guidelines must be adhered to.

Note: please see ViaSport’s Sport Activity Chart below of their [Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.](#) which provides added information on what may be allow over time.

Currently we are in the Transition Measures Phase. This also means in September, there is a possibility that we could still be in the “Transition Measures” phase which would allow us to train with modified training activities under physical distancing measures.

	Strictest Controls Prior to May 19, 2020	Transition Measures Approx. May 19th to September	Progressively Loosen Future date TBC	New Normal Future date TBC
Restrictions in Place	Maintain Physical Distance (2m) No non-essential travel	Maintain Physical Distance (2m) No non-essential travel No group gatherings over 50 people	Refer to PHO and local health authorities	Refer to PHO and local health authorities
Enhanced Protocols	Increased hand hygiene	Increased hand hygiene Symptom Screenings in place	Increased hand hygiene	Increased hand hygiene
Facility	Outdoor or within home Facilities and playgrounds closed	Outdoor is safest Indoor activities slowly reopening	Outdoor/indoor	Outdoor/indoor
Participants	Individual activities	Small Groups No or limited spectators	Groups sizes may increase Limited spectators	Large groups allowed No restrictions on spectators
Non-contact Activities	Low risk outdoor activities can occur (biking, running, etc.) Virtual activities	Fundamental movement skills Modified training activities	Expansion of training activities	No restrictions on activity type
Contact Activities	Should not occur	Should not occur Contact sports should look for non-contact alternatives to training	Introduction to pair of small group contact skills	No restrictions on activity type
Competition	Should not occur	In club play or modified games may slowly be introduced	Interclub or regional game play may be considered	Provincial competitions and larger scale events may return
Equipment	No shared equipment	Minimal shared equipment Disinfect any shared equipment before, during and after use	Some shared equipment Enhanced cleaning protocols in place	Shared equipment

COVID-19 Transmission and Symptoms

COVID-19 is transmitted via liquid droplets when a person coughs or sneezes but also potentially when they are talking in very close proximity to another person. The virus in these droplets then can enter the body of another person when that person breathes in the droplets or when the droplets touch the eyes, nose or throat of that person.

This requires you to be in close contact – less than the so-called physical distancing of three to six feet. This is referred to as ‘droplet’ transmission and is believed to be the primary way COVID-19 is transmitted.

COVID-19 can also be transmitted through droplets in the environment if someone touches a contaminated area then touches their face without cleaning their hands. The virus does not enter the body through skin; it enters through the eyes, nose or mouth when the person touches their face. Unfortunately, human beings touch their faces very often throughout the day, much more than they realize. This is why regular handwashing and cleaning of high-touch surfaces is so important.

For COVID-19 there are some emerging indications that there are people who can shed COVID-19 virus 24 to 48 hours prior to symptom onset, but at present, it is not known whether this is a significant risk factor for transmission.

Droplet transmission is much more likely when in close contact in an indoor setting. Transmission is less likely in an outdoor setting, where there is more space for people to keep physically distanced. However, in the context of sports, even outdoors there can be risks from high-touch surfaces because many sports involve objects that are normally shared among players, coaches or volunteers (balls, equipment, etc.).

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses, including the flu and the common cold. These symptoms include fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and loss of appetite.

People infected with COVID-19 may experience little or no symptoms, with illness ranging from mild to severe. Some people are more vulnerable to developing severe illness or complications from COVID-19, including older people and those with chronic health conditions.

Families should familiarize themselves with the symptoms associated with COVID-19 and the measures to take by reviewing the information found on the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) website.

Registration

All team and player registration run by MWSL will be through online registration process and there will be no in office registration or drop in allowed

When registering players and teams will need to confirm they understand the MWSL Assumption of Risk Waiver, Release of Liability, Waiver of Claims and Indemnity Agreement, and Participant Agreement particularly that COVID-19 is not covered under club insurance.

Teams/clubs planning to return to play/practice will be required to have their own return to play procedures in place and tools to do so have been provided through the links to BC Soccer and ViaSport.

1. Review BC Soccer's Return to Play Plan Phase 1 – Recommendations and Guidelines and ViaSport's Return to Sport Guidelines for B.C.
2. Fully complete Canada Soccer's "Return to Soccer Assessment Tool" which requires you to commit to offer soccer activity under the terms in BC Soccer's Return to Play Plan Phase 1 – Recommendations and Guidelines.
3. Pass a board motion (if applicable) supporting the soccer activity that your organization is choosing to offer under the terms.
4. Establish the training program(s) and offer the safest possible environment for all participants that choose to participate.

Note: - A report from Canada Soccer's "Return to Soccer Assessment Tool" will be provided to the individual completing the assessment, to BC Soccer, and to Canada Soccer. Once you have completed the Canada Soccer's Return to Soccer Assessment tool please send your report to MWSL at admin@mwsl.com so that we are assured you have completed the required steps to return to play.

The MWSL has followed the BC Soccer guidelines as well in creating the league's return to play procedures but they only encompass the services that the league would normally provide i.e. games and clinics. Any other soccer activities and any decision made by the teams is at their discretion and the league is not liable.

Group Sizes

B.C.'s Public Health Officer has issued an order barring gatherings of 50 or more people. Maximum group size counts need to consider staff, coaches, participants, spectators, etc.

All regular sized soccer fields will have no more than 50 participants on the field. Group sizes will be based on the recommendations of BC Soccer. Training sessions will be structured to

maintain a minimum of 2M of physical distancing between participants and coaching staff at all times.

PREPARING TO PLAY – PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST INFECTIONS - Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before going to the soccer activity.

- Bring hand sanitizer. [See home page on the website for products and price list from Bacchus Environmental Inc. if you are in need of sanitizer](#)
- Bring your own soccer ball.
- Bring your own water bottle.
- Clean your equipment, including your water bottle.
- Do not share equipment.
- Change into your soccer apparel at home (not at the field location).
- Make sure you have enough water before leaving the house to avoid having to touch a tap or water fountain handle.
- Consider wearing a mask or gloves while playing.
- If you cough or sneeze, do so in a tissue or in your sleeve.
- Avoid touching door handles, gates, benches and all other objects where the virus could survive.
- If you touch something, make sure to wash your hands and disinfect the surface you have touched as quickly as possible.

WHILE PLAYING

- Comply with the distancing measures and recommendations issued by the provincial government health authorities, including the arrival and departure of players (except for family members or persons residing in the same household).
- Listen to your coach and keep to the area of the field the coach has instructed you to be in.
- As much as possible, keep a 2-meter distance with other players.
- Avoid physical contact with other players.
- Do not shake hands or do fist bumps, with other players.
- Avoid touching the ball and other equipment with your hands.
- Goalkeeper must not share gloves.

AFTER PLAYING

- Wash your hands carefully with water and soap or with hand sanitizer.
- Do not use locker rooms or changing areas.
- Leave the field as quickly as possible after you finish playing.

EQUIPMENT

- Exercise caution with any and all equipment that is being used.
- Ask players to avoid touching equipment with their hands.

- Try to restrict soccer ball use, one per player or in small groups. Perhaps, if the session is solely individual skill development, each player could bring from home their own ball for them to solely use at the session.
- If equipment is manipulated by participants, hand sanitation and ball washing at Ingress/Egress is required.

Provide a Clean and Safe Environment

The MWSL understands that in the vast majority of cases soccer occurs on municipality/city fields and then in some small instances some groups do own facilities. Members/teams and all participants must follow the guidelines laid out by each municipality they are using.

Facility Access and Use

Public health officials have indicated that the use of outdoor facilities are generally safer as there is greater ventilation and ability to physical distance. This does not limit indoor sports from re-opening but it does increase the risk factor and therefore adds further considerations related to facility operations

The Provincial Health Officer has banned gatherings of 50 or more. This ban is expected to remain in force until the end of the state of emergency. The ban applies to events which could result in people gathering closely together, but where the space is large enough to allow appropriate distancing between people, it is generally recommended that facilities should have a minimum of five sq. meters of “unencumbered floor space” per person. “Unencumbered floor space” means total floor space minus the amount of space taken by built-in fittings, counters, closets etc. Please refer to your facility operator for further guidance on capacity.

Those that utilize outdoor facilities will need to consider:

- The ability to control group sizes and proximity within the outdoor environment.
- Booking procedures that may be in place with the municipality for use of fields, etc.

Those that utilize indoor facilities will need to look at:

- Whether it is possible to re-locate activities to the outdoors – if so, look into how to obtain a permit
- Whether they are the owner, operator or renter/user of the facility as this will have different implications and responsibilities related to it
- Additional municipal guidelines that may be in place
- Whether or not multiple groups/sports will be held within the same facility

First Aid

In the event that first aid is required to be administered during an activity, all persons attending to the injured individual must first put on a mask and gloves.

First aid protocols for an unresponsive person during COVID-19:

<https://www.redcross.ca/training-andcertification/first-aid-tips-and-resources/first-aid-tips/first-aid-protocols-for-an-unresponsive-personduring-covid-19>

Safety for Participants, Volunteers

Participants, Team Officials & Staff should not attend a training session/game if:

- you don't feel well or are displaying symptoms of COVID-19
- someone in your household has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID-19
- you have traveled outside of Canada within the last 14 days
- someone in your household has traveled outside of Canada within the last 14 days
- Consider your own risk - if you are at higher risk of experiencing serious illness from COVID-19, consider limiting or avoiding participation in the sport activities for the time being.

<https://bc.thrive.health/BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool> is available for anyone that develops symptoms and can be used to help determine if you need further assessment or testing for COVID-19.

Outbreak Plan

Early detection of symptoms will facilitate the immediate implementation of effective control measures. In addition, the early detection and immediate implementation of enhanced cleaning measures are two of the most important factors in limiting the size and length of an outbreak. An "outbreak" is two or more cases; a "case" is a single case of COVID-19.

In the event of a suspected case or outbreak of influenza-like-illness, immediately report it to the MWSL and call 811 to discuss the suspected outbreak with the Medical Health Officer

In the case of an outbreak being reported the League Manager and the MWSL Board of Directors will have the authority to modify, restrict, postpone or cancel activities.

If staff (including volunteers) or a participant reports they are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 and have been at the workplace/activity place, we will contact the facility in question immediately so they can implement enhanced cleaning measures to reduce risk of transmission. We will implement our illness policy and advise individuals to:

- self-isolate

- monitor their symptoms daily, report respiratory illness and not to return to activity for at least 10 days following the onset of fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat and painful swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and loss of appetite.
- use the COVID-19 self-assessment tool at BC COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to help determine if further assessment or testing for COVID-19 is needed.
- Individuals can contact 8-1-1 if further health advice is required and 9-1-1 if it is an emergency.

Illness Policy

In this policy, “Team member” includes an employee, volunteer, participant or parent/spectator.

1. Inform an individual in a position of authority (coach, team manager, program coordinator) immediately if, you feel any symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, chills, cough, shortness of breathe, sore throat and painful swallowing, stuffy or runny nose, loss of sense of smell, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and loss of appetite.

2. Assessment

a. Team members must review the self-assessment each morning before their practice/activity to attest that they are not feeling any of the COVID 19 symptoms.

b. Managers/coaches will visually monitor team members to assess any early warning signs as to the status of their health and to touch base on how they are regarding their personal safety throughout the workday/practice/activity.

c. If Team Members are unsure please have them use the self-assessment tool <https://bc.thrive.health/covid19/en> or through the COVID-19 BC Support App self-assessment tool.

3. If a Team Member is feeling sick with COVID-19 symptoms

a. They should remain at home and contact Health Link BC at 8-1-1.

b. If they feel sick and /or are showing symptoms while at work, they should be sent home immediately and have them contact 8-1-1 or a doctor for further guidance.

c. No Team Member may participate in a practice/activity if they are symptomatic.

4. If a Team Member tests positive for COVID-19

a. The Team Member will not be permitted to return to the workplace/practice/facility until they are free of the COVID-19 virus.

- b. Any Team Members who work/play closely with the infected Team Member will also be removed from the workplace/practice/facility for at least 14 days to ensure the infection does not spread further.
 - c. Close off, clean and disinfect their work/practice/facility area immediately and any surfaces that could have potentially been infected/touched.
- 5. If a Team Member has been tested and is waiting for the results of a COVID-19 Test
 - a. As with the confirmed case, the Team Member must be removed from the workplace/practice/facility.
 - b. The Public Health Agency of Canada advises that any person who has even mild symptoms to stay home and call the public health authority of B.C.
 - c. Other Team Members who may have been exposed will be informed and removed from the workplace/practice/activity for at least 14 days or until the diagnosis of COVID-19 is ruled out by health authorities.
 - d. The workspace/practice/activity space will be closed off, cleaned, and disinfected immediately and any other surfaces that could have potentially been infected/touched.
- 6. If a Team Member has come in to contact with someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19
 - a. Team Members must advise their employer/coach if they reasonably believe they have been exposed to COVID-19.
 - b. Once the contact is confirmed, the Team Member will be removed from the workplace/practice/activity for at least 14 days or as otherwise directed by public health authorities. Team Members who may have come into close contact with the Team Member will also be removed from the workplace for at least 14 days.
 - c. The workspace/activity area will be closed off, cleaned, and disinfected immediately and any other surfaces that could have potentially been infected/touched.
- 7. Quarantine or Self-Isolate if:
 - a. Any Team Member who has travelled outside of Canada or the province within the last 14 days is not permitted to enter any part of the facility and must quarantine and self-isolate.
 - b. Any Team Member with any symptoms of COVID-19 is not permitted to enter any part of the facility and must quarantine and self-isolate.

c. Any Team Member from a household with someone showing symptoms of COVID-19 is not permitted to enter any part of the facility and must quarantine and self-isolate.

d. Any Team Member who is in quarantine or self-isolating as a result of contact with an infected person or in families who are self-isolating, is not permitted to enter any part of the facility.

Disclaimer

It is important to note that this document is not a legal document and is not a substitute for actual legislation or orders of the Provincial Health Office. Links to third party web sites are provided solely for convenience.