

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S RETURN TO SPORT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL RESTRICTIONS RELATED TO SPORT

April 30, 2021

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GENERAL

Q: What restrictions are in place for sport?

A: On March 15, 2021, sport-specific updates were added to [the Provincial Health Officer Order on Gatherings and Events](#), a summary of which is available on [this page](#). Further, on April 21, 2021, the Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General introduced further travel restrictions in [Ministerial Order M172](#). The intent of these orders are to significantly reduce social interactions and travel. The impacts on sport include:

- All indoor and outdoor adult group sport activities for people 22 years of age and older are limited to the following:
 - Indoor activities – maximum of two people
 - Outdoor activities – maximum of 10 people
 - Physical distance of three metres is always maintained on the field of play, unless the participants reside in the same private residence.
- The government website lists a number of sports as examples, but it is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list. **All sport** must follow these restrictions.
- Indoor and outdoor sport for people under 22 years of age can continue but:
 - Participants must maintain a physical distance of three metres from one another while on the field of play;
 - Activities should be low risk of transmitting the virus (e.g. individual activities, group training that maintains physical distance). Tournaments and events outside the club are not allowed.
- Travel restrictions are in place for sport. See the section on [travel](#) below for details.
- No spectators are allowed at any sport activities unless to provide care for the participant.

Q: What Return to Sport Phase are we in?

A: There have been some misconceptions that sport is currently in Phase 2 of the Return to Sport Process – this is not the case. Sports must follow the current Provincial Health Officer Order and travel restrictions (as stated above) and not their Phase 2 plan.

Q: How long are the restrictions in place?

A: On February 5, the Office of the Public Health Officer extended the Order for events and gatherings. The Order can be revised at any time or additional orders could be put in place that supersede this Order.

Q: Has the definition of physical distance changed?

A: Previous guidelines related to sport have referred to physical distance as two metres. However, the PHO Order for Events and Gatherings specifically states that sport needs to maintain three metres of physical distance while on the field of play.

Q: Are masks required when participating in indoor sport?

A: Masks are now required to be worn by all individuals in indoor public settings. This includes common areas of sport and fitness centres when not engaged in physical activity. Masks may be removed temporarily in indoor public places while participating in a sport activity.

Link: [Mask Mandate Order](#)

Q: If masks are worn, can the requirement to physical distance be reduced?

A: Masks can be worn as an additional layer of protection, but the requirement to maintain three metres of physical distance is still in place.

Q: Are there enforcement mechanisms in place?

A: Orders can be enforced by police or other compliance and enforcement officials. Individuals or organizations who do not follow the order can be fined.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/violation-tickets>

Q: Are in-person coach/officials training courses allowed to occur?

A: In-person group education should only occur if absolutely necessary. The current [Gathering and Events Order](#) states, “For certainty, this Order does not apply to students and instructors when engaged in occupational training activities which cannot be provided virtually by their nature.” The host organization of a training course must have a safety plan in place for the training event that outlines appropriate safety protocols such as physical distancing, mask use, etc.

Q: If we are a sport organization but are running low or high intensity classes, do we need to follow Public Health’s Guidance to Group Low Intensity Exercise?

A: Yes, all group fitness activities, including fitness activities run by sport organizations, must comply with current Provincial Health Officer Orders and Public Health guidance.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-public-health-guidelines-low-intensity-exercise.pdf>

Q: What restrictions are in place for spectators?

A: No spectators are permitted for sport, unless necessary to provide care to a participant (e.g. first aid attendants).

Q: What exemptions are in place for high performance athletes?

A: High performance athletes are individuals who have been identified to a targeted athlete list with the Canadian Sport Institute Pacific by their respective Provincial Sport Organization or National Sport Organization. A person who is a high-performance athlete who is already training in B.C. as of November 19, 2020 may train and compete for that purpose if they follow the COVID safety protocols of their respective provincial or national sport organization. As of April 21, 2021, travel [between the three identified health zones](#) below is not allowed according to [Ministerial Order M172](#) (see Travel for Sport below).

TRAVEL FOR SPORT

Q: What are the current travel restrictions in place?

A: As of April 21, 2021, [Ministerial Order M172](#) restricts non-essential travel between health authority regions. For this purpose, the regions are defined as:

- "Northern-Interior Health Authority region": Northern Health Authority region; the Interior Health Authority region; the local health areas of Bella Coola Valley, Central Coast and Hope;
- "Fraser-Vancouver Coastal Health Authority region": the Fraser Health Authority region and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority region, excluding the local health areas of Bella Coola Valley and Central Coast;
- "Island Health Authority region"

For sport, this means that travel to home clubs or high-performance athlete travel (i.e. those who are registered with Canadian Sport Institute Pacific) that crosses a health authority region as outlined above is not allowed. Any travel that is related to sport across one of the three zones needs to be postponed until at least after May 24.

Q: Can I travel to my home club if it is outside my community, but within my local health authority?

A: Although most sport should be played within the participant’s community, there are some examples where an individual can travel short distances that do not cross health authority region boundaries. For example:

- A skier who is part of the local ski club can travel to their local mountain, which might be in a neighbouring community;
- an archer may need to travel to a neighbouring community because their community does not have an archery club;
- a high-performance athlete may need to travel to a nearby community to receive specialized training.

Travel that is **not** allowed includes:

- a hockey player travelling from Vernon to Penticton to participate on their spring hockey team;
- a softball player traveling from Kamloops to Vancouver to participate on their rep team;
- a dancer travelling from Langley to Whistler to participate in a virtual competition.

Q: Can high-performance athletes identified by Canadian Sport Institute Pacific travel within BC?

A: High performance athletes cannot travel from one health region to another but can travel within the region (defined above) they live.

Q: Is any interprovincial travel allowed for sport?

A: With the exception of identified high performance athletes, those identified to a targeted athlete list with the Canadian Sport Institute Pacific by their respective provincial sport organization or national sport organization and already training in B.C., there is no travel allowed between provinces for sport

ADULT SPORT

Q: What is the definition of adult?

A: Adults are 22 years of age and older. The PHO Order for Events and Gatherings differentiates between adult and youth sport activities.

Q: If three metres physical distance can be maintained, can team programming for adults continue?

A: Adult group sport is defined as sporting activities involving more than one person and includes training and practice for an individual team sport. As of March 15, 2021, adult group sport activities such as training and drills are permitted provided the following conditions are met:

- Indoor group sport is only permitted in groups of up to two people (e.g. singles tennis or an athlete and a coach training session).
- Outdoor group sport is only permitted in groups of up to ten people (e.g. ten individuals may run together or ten individuals could run soccer drills).
- All participants must maintain a distance of three metres from one another while participating in the sport activity unless they are members of the same household.

Q: Are adults able to access a sport facility to train?

A: Similar to a gym setting, individuals may access a facility to train individually or with a partner or coach (up to two people). If the facility is outdoors, individuals may train in groups of up to ten.

Multiple individuals or groups may be able to access a facility at one time (space permitting) provided there are no gatherings occurring. For example, more than one tennis court can be used at a time but individuals must stay to their assigned space.

Q: What happens for programs that have a mix of adult and youth participants?

A: The program may continue; however, this Order means that those who are 22 years of age and older must follow the group sport restrictions (i.e. a maximum of two adults indoors and ten adults outdoors). However, if the facility is able to have designated spaces for different groups, it is possible for a youth group to be participating in the same facility separately from an adult group. These groupings should not interact with each other or share coaches.

Q: Can youth and adults both participate in sport if they reside in the same household?

A: The current order allows for the three metre physical distance restriction to be lifted if all participants reside in the same household. However, if you live in the same household, you are not allowed to increase the maximum number of participants (i.e. two for indoor and ten for outdoor). That is, two adults can play with their two children indoors without maintaining physical distance, but three adults who live together could not play together indoors (with or without children participation).

Q: Can varsity athletes continue to train?

A: Varsity sport is defined in the order as a sport for which the eligibility requirements for participation are established by a national association for the regulation of intercollegiate athletics, or which is designated as a varsity sport program by a post-secondary institution. Individuals may participate in varsity sport if they are a member of a varsity sport team and they only train or practice with the post-secondary institution with which they are enrolled. At this time, varsity sport need to follow the children and youth restrictions.

SPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Q: What activities are allowed for children and youth?

A: Indoor and outdoor sport for children and youth (under 22 years of age) can continue, but:

- participants must maintain a physical distance of three metres from one another;
- activities should be low risk of transmitting the virus (e.g. individual activities, group training that maintains physical distance);
- there are no spectators present, unless to provide care (i.e. first aid) to a participant.

Q: Are there maximum group sizes in place for youth?

A: Group sizes are dependent on the size of the facility and the ability to maintain physical distance of at least three metres during the activities. No matter how large the space is, group sizes cannot exceed 50 people.

Q: Can youth team sports still have games within their home club?

A: Most sports will not be able to play games at this time, either due to the restrictions on distancing or travel. Those sports that can maintain distance while playing a game may continue to do so as part of their training in-club only (e.g. singles tennis). However, tournaments and events are not permitted.

Q: Can individual sports such as swimming or speed skating still run informal time trials within the club setting?

A: If the intent of the activity is for training where officials and extra volunteers are not necessary, and all other components of the Order are followed, these activities can occur.