

BRITISH COLUMBIA'S RETURN TO SPORT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UPDATED: MAY 25, 2020

RETURN TO SPORT GUIDELINES

Q: What is the directive from the provincial government?

A: The Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture has advised that the sport sector may begin the process towards return to sports. The Provincial Health Officer (PHO) has asked all sectors to think about three things: processes to open safely, measures to keep people safe to avoid further outbreaks, and a plan in the event that a case or an outbreak should occur.

Q: What health guidelines are in place?

A: PHO orders and recommendations include:

- Prohibition of gatherings of 50 people or more;
- Physical distancing of at least two metres;
- Frequent hand hygiene;
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection and
- Self-isolation for employees who have symptoms of COVID-19 for a minimum of 10 days (or self-isolation for 14 days if returning to Canada from another country)
- Symptom screening for staff and participants

Q: What is viaSport's role in Return to Sport?

A: For our sector, Premier Horgan and the Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Lisa Beare, have asked viaSport to work with the sport sector in developing a set of guidelines on how to resume sport and operate safely during this pandemic.

Those guidelines will be reviewed by cross-ministry officials within government and WorkSafe BC. Once reviewed, the sector return to sport guidelines will be used by Provincial Sport Organizations as they finalize and implement sport-specific plans.

Q: What support do local sport organizations have in the return to sport process?

viaSport, Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs), the viaSport Regional Alliance, and your municipalities are resources to support local sport organizations in the return to sport process. Local sport organizations should reach out to these group should they have specific questions or are needing support. If there is uncertainty about the meaning of any aspect of the Restart Plan or the sport guidelines, viaSport will strive to provide clarity.

Q: What information is included in the Sport Sector guidelines?

A: The guidelines should further outline protocols related to PHO orders and recommendations and provide further direction as they relate to facility access, facility operations, sport-specific programming and participant information.

It will also include links and references to BCCDC, Health Canada, WorkSafe BC, etc.

Q: When will the sector guidelines be available?

A: As of May 19th, the sector return to sport guidelines have been sent to the government for review. Timelines for review and approval back to viaSport have not been confirmed, but everyone is working hard to expedite the process.

SCOPE OF RETURN TO SPORT

Q: What types of activities are allowed within the current phase (Phase2)?

A: Low risk activities that can occur with the following public health recommendations in place:

- Ability to maintain physical distancing
- Minimal sharing of equipment
- Focus is on skill development, not competition
- Community focused

Q: What will future phases look like in regards to sport activity?

A: viaSport has developed a [Sport Activity Chart](#) that outlines the types of activities that can be considered as we transition through the different phases. You will see that there is a range of activities that may be allowed within a given phase, it is however still the advice of the PHO to move slowly. Therefore, sport specific plans may progress at different speeds and may look to have more phases than are outlined in this chart.

Q: What is the maximum allowable group size?

A: The maximum group size is 50 people. Sports will need to consider other factors to determine what number is appropriate for their space and the ability to maintain physical distancing. As we transition back to sport, we should be cautious to not jump to these maximum numbers too quickly.

Q: What is the definition of community focused?

A: Community focused sport activities take place within the home sport community or clubs where participants are members. This means avoiding cross-regional, inter-provincial or cross-country travel for sport.

Q: What is the difference between recreational activities and organized sport activities?

A: Organized sport is defined as any organized sport activity that involves a number of people doing something together in a structured way and is facilitated by a Provincial Sport Organization or Local Sport Organization.

“Recreation” as defined by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association is the “experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing.” Physical activities would include those undertaken as leisure, fitness training and sport-related activities that are done at the discretion of the individual (e.g. – use of parks, hiking trails, public recreation facilities), and are self-led.

Recreational facilities have been given the go-ahead to begin re-opening in certain municipalities by their public health authority. This allows the facilities to open up access to the public to participate in recreational activities under their own risk. That said, user groups such as sport organizations should ensure that their sport specific guidelines are in place before they begin utilizing these or other facilities to offer organized sport activities.

Q: Will sports that include sharing of a ball or integral piece of equipment be allowed to resume activities in phase one?

A: Sharing of equipment creates greater risk of spread of the virus. Therefore, in order to resume activities the sports will need to have guidelines in place that look to mitigate that risk. This should include regular cleaning, disinfection between users (where possible), hand washing before and after use/play, etc.

Q: What is the definition of competitive activities?

A: Competitive activities are formal, organized games, matches and tournaments between participants where scores are recorded and standings are kept. The majority of sport will be geared towards community participation and training rather than games and provincial competition.

Q: When is competition allowed?

This will vary from sport to sport. Some sports will be able to introduce in-club play or modified games during this initial phase of re-opening if they deem those activities to be low risk. Organizations should re-introduce these activities slowly and be cautious of group sizes. Larger scale competitions and events will need to wait for further direction from the PHO.

Q: Are individuals over the age of 50 permitted to participate in organized sports?

A: Older adults are considered a vulnerable population and are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Those at increased risk due to compromised immune systems should not take part in recreational or sport activities. However, it is up to the individual to understand their risks and make a decision about whether or not to participate. As a sport organization if you are planning programming for older adults you will need to ensure that health guidelines are being followed and look for further ways to mitigate risk, such as smaller group sizes and specific timeslots for this population group.

RETURN TO SPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Q: Will there be a sport specific return to sport date, depending on each sport return to play protocol?

A: Each sport will have different dates in which they will resume based on the type of sport, access to facilities, the ability to adapt to Public Health Guidelines and the development of their sport-specific plans.

Q: The Office of the Public Officer announced that sport and recreation are allowed in phase 2 that started on May 19th, 2020. Why has my club not resumed activities?

A: Although sport and recreation are now allowed in phase 2, local sport organizations will need to make sure they have a detailed return to sport plan in place that aligns with health guidelines before activities can start. This plan must be made available to the public.

Local clubs should adapt and adopt their Provincial Sport Organization's return to sport guidelines. Local sport organizations must get board approval of their return to sport plans and post their plans and messaging beside fields of play as well as communicated to their members.

Q: Are approvals required on the Return to Sport plans?

A: The sector Return to Sport Guidelines will be reviewed by public health officials and WorkSafe BC. Sport-specific plans developed by Provincial Sport Organizations or at the club level do not require government approval, but must be approved by the organization's Board of Directors.

Q: Why have golf courses been allowed to reopen before sport sector guidelines are in place?

A: Golf courses in B.C. were never ordered closed. Some golf courses have also received permission of from local health authorities to reopen. Organized sport activities such as tournaments and club play remains on hold.

Q: Is COVID-19 covered under insurance?

A: It is important to note that most insurance policies exclude coverage related to communicable diseases or pandemics, including Directors and Officers Insurance. Therefore, return to sport discussions should include acknowledgement of the inherent risk to the resumption of sport during a pandemic and clear strategies to mitigation of these risks.

Q: What happens if a local sport organization resumes activities before a return to sport plan has been approved by their PSO?

A: Local Sport Organizations (LSOs) are not authorized to organize sport programming or activities until there is a sport sector plan reviewed by public health officials. Although there are no clear ramifications for LSOs who do not follow the return to sport process right now, it should be made clear that by operating puts the safety of participants, and their communities in jeopardy, as well as putting their LSOs at risk by not aligning with public health protocols.

Q: What happens if a private organization resumes activities through a sport club or that are linked to but not traditionally defined as sport?

A: Every organization has the responsibility to follow provincial health orders during the pandemic. Sector specific guidelines are being developed to help inform organizations on a phased and safe process for re-opening. Organizations should seek out the appropriate guidelines in order to make informed decisions and plan appropriately.

Q: Why are private sport organizations in my community allowed to resume activities but my Local Sport Organization is being told to wait?

A: Every organization has the responsibility to follow provincial health orders and must have in place a COVID-19 safety plan before re-opening. Organizations should seek out the appropriate guidelines in order to make informed decisions and plan appropriately. Private companies are encouraged to follow the sport sector return to sport guidelines, reach out to viaSport for support or connect with their sport's PSO.

Q: Where will the responsibility for ensuring the cleaning protocols, restricted space, etc. are maintained? Is that a responsibility of the municipality or the local association?

A: The facility owner or operator has overall responsibility for cleaning protocols within the facility. However, anyone renting/utilizing their space is responsible for ensuring there are sufficient protocols in place as well as ensuring all equipment used in properly cleaned.

Q: What is the municipality's role in decision making related to Return to Sport and access to their facilities?

A: Municipalities will be developing their own set of guidelines in line with provincial and local health orders and recommendations and may require approval by their mayor or council. Municipal decisions will be made locally; community by community. This will impact sports organizations who use municipal facilities, and/or multiple facilities across jurisdictions.

Municipalities will want to ensure that all user groups have a return to sport plan in place that is aligned with the sport sector guidelines before utilizing their facilities.

If possible, you should consult resources available from local health authorities.

Q: Are gym facilities able to open their doors?

A: Local orders were in place for Island Health, Interior Health and Fraser Health to close gym facilities; however, those bans have been lifted as of May 19th, 2020. Gyms in BC can open if they follow provincial health guidelines and their local health authority. Check with your local health authority to see if they have developed guidelines.

Q: Are there any guidelines for first aid during the pandemic?

A: 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.

[A guide for employers and Occupational First Aid Attendants](#)

[First aid protocols for an unresponsive person during COVID-19](#)

[Lifesaving Society BC: Resuscitation and First Aid Recommendations \(see page 29\)](#)

Q: If I individually choose to participate in activities, what can I do to protect myself?

If you don't feel well, are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, you have travelled outside of Canada or you live in a household with someone who has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID – please stay home. If you are healthy and choose to participate in physical activities outside the home:

- Wash your hands before and after participating
- Bring your own equipment, water bottle and hand sanitizer
- Comply with physical distancing measures at all time
- Avoid physical contact with others, including shaking hands, high fives, etc
- Leave the field of play as quickly as possible after you finish
- Follow the rules and guidelines as set out by the facility and sport organization

HEALTH GUIDELINES

Q: How can you reduce the risk of transmission?

A: B.C. public health officials have referenced a [Hierarchy of Controls for COVID-19](#), outlining that the most effective method of reducing transmission is physical distancing, followed by engineering controls, administrative controls and personal protective equipment.

Q: What tools are available for symptom screening?

A: Assessment tools are available for participants to use to assess their health before participating in an activity. [B.C. COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool](#) or wellness questionnaires can be used.

Q: What are the recommendations related to cleaning and disinfection?

A: According to the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#), general cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces should occur at least once a day. Surfaces that are highly touched (including bathrooms) should be cleaned twice a day. Follow [Health Canada Guidelines](#) on what products to use for cleaning and disinfecting.

Q: What resources are in place related to communicating personal hygiene and protection against COVID-19?

A: [COVID-19 Protection poster](#)
[Physical Distancing poster](#)
[Handwashing poster](#)
[Do not enter if you are sick poster](#)