

Tourism, Heritage & Culture – Sport & Recreation Branch

Updated communication on physical distancing in sport by NB Public Health

September 1, 2020

Risk of transmission is informed by factors including **physical contact, context, and disease epidemiology**. **Risk associated with physical contact is influenced by a combination of variables** including proximity, duration, frequency, intensity, and number of contacts (e.g. tackle, checking, blocking, etc.) and is cumulative in nature. Risk is greatest during prolonged and close interactions. Prolonged interactions are those generally greater than 15 minutes (team benches, huddles, locker rooms, closer game play with more stationary positions, etc.) Close interactions are those less than 2 metres of physical separation. Context-related factors include: Indoor settings, confined spaces, poorer ventilation, and crowds. Risk is also influenced by colder temperature, higher humidity, and air flow patterns. Activity may exacerbate transmission (e.g., physical activity/exertion, singing, cheering). Risk is mediated by the extent to which each individual and those that surround them at any given time are following public health measures. Due to COVID-19 transmission pathways, physical distancing is a top risk mitigation method.

Sports, like all other sectors in New Brunswick, must adapt to meet the public health measures to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission and infection. Risk mitigation must consider and apply across all relevant contexts (e.g., during *and* before/after game play) and participants (e.g., players, staff, volunteers, officials, spectators, etc.). A layered approach to risk mitigation is required, combining effective modifications across physical distancing, enhanced cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surface areas, wearing a face mask as required and where recommended, screening and staying home when sick or required to self-isolate, and following good hand and respiratory hygiene.

In the context of game play, sports are expected to adapt to better enable physical distancing to the greatest extent possible, while still permitting resumption of game play in the current yellow phase. More effective adaptation and risk mitigation will provide greater protection from COVID-19 infection and transmission. Provincial Sport Organizations (PSOs) and local clubs should adopt a more precautionary approach where possible.

Brief, incidental contact on the field of play is permitted so long as that contact cannot reasonably be avoided. Intentional contact during sport game play is not encouraged (e.g., checking, tackling, etc.).

At present, PSOs and sport **should not resume ‘normal game play’ where ‘normal game play’ would be expected to undermine ability to ensure physical distancing** (while recognizing that brief incidental physical contact is acceptable). In all instances where distancing is possible, measures should be put in place.

As we move into the new school season and incur new risks, NB Public Health will be monitoring COVID-19 disease epidemiology. A second wave or further clusters of COVID-19 are anticipated. Further consideration of lessening physical distancing requirements during sport play and sport activities will be explored after October to enable a more informed assessment. At this time, the expectation continues to remain that sports are required to adapt to the public health measures, including physical distancing, both during and pre/post game play (except for incidental, brief contact). The FAQ's provided by Tourism Heritage and Culture, Sports and Recreation Consultants remain current and valid – please continue to work with your respective Consultants for further guidance.