

STAGE 3: GUIDANCE FOR ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN 11 AND UNDER

Overview

Good public health practices can minimize transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include: proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting and staying home when sick.

This document has been developed to support organizations, organizers and operators who work with children aged 11 and under in reducing the risk of transmission of these infections among children, parents and guardians, staff, volunteers and the general public by providing options to integrate good public health practices into normal operations.

Children aged 11 and under are at the lowest risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 infection, and are less likely than adults to transmit infection to others, however they are also not eligible for COVID-19 vaccine at this time. As a result, this age group does not have any vaccine protection against infection and disease transmission. Given this, organizers and operators who work with this age group (e.g., offering youth sport, performance, recreational and other programming) should take a risk-balanced approach and are strongly encouraged to use a combination of strategies from this Guidance to protect them from COVID-19. Operators/organizers are also strongly encouraged to inform caregivers of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.

The strategies included in this Guidance are built on lessons learned and strategies that were successful throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Operators of child care facilities and day and overnight camps can also refer to the Guidance for Camps and the Guidance for Preschool, Day Care and Out of School Care for strategies specific to these settings.

Businesses and entities should promote COVID-19 vaccination to staff, volunteers and attendees and other eligible persons as part of their public health strategy.

All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) orders.

Respiratory Disease Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Operators are encouraged to use this guidance in conjunction with the General Guidance for COVID-19 and Other Respiratory Infections.
- Risk of COVID-19 spread increases in crowded settings, indoor locations, and enclosed spaces with poor ventilation. These risks may be reduced by:
 - limiting the number of children that are present in a particular setting at one time;
 - hosting activities outside or in other well-ventilated areas; or
 - improving ventilation by opening doors and windows.
- Activity-based risks may be reduced by:

STAGE 3: GUIDANCE FOR ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN 11 AND UNDER

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Limiting activities which cause heavier breathing and produce more respiratory particles, such as singing and shouting;○ Assigning children to fixed groups that do not change for the duration of the event or activity.○ Assigning the same staff / volunteer to a single group of children for the duration of the event or activity.○ Allow sufficient time between groups to clean the area and any shared objects.
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Staff and children should self-screen or be screened for COVID-19 symptoms by a staff member, parent or guardian before participating in an activity, using the applicable checklist for their age group (Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist or Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist).● Individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms must isolate at home; they are not permitted to access or attend any activities.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider posting signs and issuing verbal or written reminders that children who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and not attend.● Operators are strongly encouraged to have a plan in place if a child, staff member or other attendee develops symptoms of COVID-19 while onsite. This should include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Keeping symptomatic persons separate from all others○ Implementing policies to require symptomatic individuals to leave the venue as soon as possible to go to their place of isolation.○ Enhancing cleaning and disinfection of items handled by symptomatic individuals.● Operators and organizers may wish to keep records of the children’s known pre-existing conditions in order to determine if the symptoms are associated with a pre-existing condition.● Operators are not required to provide regular testing for respiratory illnesses.
Cleaning and Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Operators are encouraged to develop and implement procedures for cleaning and disinfecting of facilities including high traffic areas, common areas, public washrooms, and showering facilities. These policies could include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ More frequent cleaning of high-touch/shared surfaces and items.○ Cleaning areas and equipment after they are used by one group and before they are used by another.● Water fountains can be open for public use but regular cleaning and disinfection is encouraged.

STAGE 3: GUIDANCE FOR ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN 11 AND UNDER

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourage children from bringing non-essential personal items from home. • Equipment or supplies that must be brought from home for a child’s day-to-day use should not be used by anyone other than the child.
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways to ensure food and beverages are not shared between children 11 years of age and younger. • Consider requiring children to bring their own food and beverages. • Hand hygiene should be encouraged prior to eating.
Physical and Performance Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People doing intense physical activities and certain performance activities (e.g., singing) are more likely to breathe heavily and produce more respiratory particles. To mitigate this increased risk, some special considerations for operators who offer these activities to children could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reducing the size of groups that participate in these activities; ○ Assigning staff and volunteers to one group only for the duration of the activity; ○ Limiting the number of sport and singing activities in which each child participates; and/or ○ Moving these activities outside wherever possible.
Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways to promote and facilitate frequent and proper hand hygiene for all children and staff, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Providing soap and running, potable water or hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. ○ Posting signs and giving verbal reminders. ○ Training workers to practice hand hygiene, particularly before and after using the washroom, serving food or having physical contact with patrons. • Inform children and staff of expectations for proper respiratory etiquette (e.g., sneezing into the elbow or a tissue, discarding the tissue immediately into a lined bin, performing hand hygiene).
Masking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no provincial requirements for masking for children’s activities, except those related to transit/transportation. • Operators/organizers can choose to require mask-wearing, in some or all parts of the venue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Masking can provide protection when two or more individuals are in close proximity for extended periods of time, or if an individual has interactions with lots of other individuals.

STAGE 3: GUIDANCE FOR ACTIVITIES WITH CHILDREN 11 AND UNDER

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Masks must be worn properly, and wearers should practice hand hygiene before and after donning the mask.○ Wearing a mask during physical activity is not recommended.● Operators and organizers should support attendees in their choice to wear a mask where it doesn't inhibit the activities being done.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Masking remains required for all individuals using shared or public transit.● Consider assigning seats when transporting children in vans or buses, if more than one group of children is being transported, assign seating to align with group membership.● Consider improving ventilation in vehicles by opening windows during travel.● Increase the frequency of vehicle cleaning when transporting children aged 11 and under.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Last Revised: July 2021