



COVID-19 RETURN TO WATER POLO RESOURCE DOCUMENT

PUBLISHED MAY 29, 2020



Table of Content

Legal Disclaimer	2
Return to Aquatics – Principles for a safe return to sport framework	3
Overarching Health, Medical and Safety Information and Considerations:.....	4
General info about COVID-19 and Aquatics.....	4
Health Monitoring.....	5
Returning to Training following a positive COVID-19 test	5
Home Isolation Recommendations.....	5
Physical Distancing.....	6
Hand and Personal Hygiene	7
Use of Equipment	7
Safe Sport.....	8
Return to Sport – Water Polo Training Guidelines	9

*Thank you to Swimming Canada Natation in particular, as well as Canada Artistic Swimming and Diving
Plongeon Canada, for their help in creating this document.*

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Return to Aquatics – Principles for a safe return to sport framework

The four Aquatics Canada sport organizations (Canada Artistic Swimming, Diving Plongeon Canada, Swimming Canada and Water Polo Canada) are committed to a safe and healthy return to the pool for all aquatic sport participants. To that end, the four sports have created a joint working group to share information, best practices and align in our shared belief that a safe return is possible, and that the health of our communities remains our top priority.

Each organization has developed its own sport specific return to sport framework. The tenets of each plan are consistent and follow all current public health information. These include a commitment to physical distancing at all stages of training, equipment cleanliness, hygiene, health monitoring, safe sport and on-going communication.

Sport is valued by Canadians and is a proven mechanism to strengthen, unite and build Canadian communities. Aquatic sports and our athletes are looked at as role models not only in the sport community but in the country at large. Our return to sport/work can show a way forward and can help Canadian communities re-unite. A safe return to the pool is critical to this process.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the collective aquatics community has had to significantly adapt its routines and activities in order to prioritize the health and wellbeing of Canadians as a whole. Aquatics Canada would like to thank everyone in the aquatics community for their leadership and commitment to flattening the curve. While it has been difficult to step away from the pool, our efforts have played an important part in combatting the pandemic.

Establishing the Principles of Return to Sport

According to the Centre for Disease Control (USA), there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through swimming pools. COVID-19 has a fragile lipid outer membrane and is therefore highly susceptible to elimination by soaps and oxidants, such as chlorine. Proper maintenance and disinfection with Chlorine or Bromine should inactivate the virus (CDC 2020).

A return to sport must strictly adhere to the policies and procedures outlined by provincial and municipal governments and public health agencies that have been established to ensure a safe environment for all. The aquatic sports joint working group has agreed on a number of key principles that will form the foundation of the return to our respective sports. These principles include:

Physical Distancing: Physical distancing is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak. Return to sport must adhere to physical distancing in accordance with requirements of public health authorities and facility operators.

Hygiene: In addition to physical distancing, handwashing and cough etiquette add another layer of protection against the spread of COVID-19. Return to sport plans must implement and monitor appropriate individual personal hygiene practices among staff, coaches and all participants at home (away from training) and during training.

Equipment Cleaning: Surfaces frequently touched with hands are most likely to be contaminated however Coronaviruses are one of the easiest types of viruses to kill with the [appropriate disinfectant](#) product when used according to the label directions.

Individual Health Monitoring: Daily individual health monitoring processes and tracking need to be in place. Individuals should not return to sport if they have been unwell (even mild symptoms), have had contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 or have travelled outside the country in the past 14 days. Staff or athletes at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to review their specific health concerns with their primary care provider prior to attending training sessions.

Safe Sport Environment: In these unique times, our commitment to providing a safe sport environment for all participants cannot waver. A return to sport program must be designed to ensure all aspects of a safe sport environment can be implemented and followed.

Planning and Communication: A robust return to training plan that includes regular communication and education with key stakeholders including athletes, coaches and others, is key for any club.

Finally, our four Aquatics National Sport Organizations would like to thank Dr. Suzanne Leclerc, CMO of the Institut national du sport du Québec, who has collaborated closely with us to produce this document.

Overarching Health, Medical and Safety Information and Considerations:

Water Polo Canada wants to thank Swimming Canada Natation for giving us permission to use and adapt this section's content.

General info about COVID-19 and Aquatics

COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus mostly found in animals, but when humans become infected, symptoms can range from mild to severe depending on a number of variables. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. Tragic consequences of this virus are being experienced around the world, including within Canada. There are many ongoing challenges for all of us to manage, and for our Canadian aquatics community, a safe and responsible return to sport is paramount. The intent of the following information is not to provide permission to return to sport, but rather to supply the reader with a guide to current medical recommendations in an attempt to mitigate risks related to COVID-19. The goal is to avoid becoming infected, and spreading to other people in the community. This document is meant to complement not replace local public health and recreation facility advice.

COVID-19 has a fragile lipid outer membrane, and is therefore highly susceptible to soaps and oxidants, such as chlorine. According to the Centre for Disease Control, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the use of pools, hot tubs or spas. Proper operation maintenance, disinfection with chlorine or bromine of pools should inactivate the virus (CDC 2020). A related coronavirus which caused the SARS epidemic in 2003, was found to be inactivated by UV treatment and disinfectors.

The following health, medical, and safety information are considered to be applicable to all Steps of the Return to Aquatics Framework until such time that public health information and guidelines change. In

addition, this information is generally applicable to all training environments including indoor pools, outdoor pools, open water, gym and outdoor land training. Provincial and Municipal Public Health information and guidelines must be respected at all times and supersede the information below.

Health Monitoring

- Athletes, coaches, and staff must answer 'NO' to all the following questions prior to attending any training session:
 - Do I have any of the symptoms: cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, difficult breathing, fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, abnormal muscle pain, headache, sore throat, painful swallowing, runny nose, new loss of taste or smell, gastrointestinal illness?
 - Have I been in contact with or cared for someone with COVID-19?
 - Have I returned from a trip outside the country within the last 2 weeks?
 - Stay home when sick, even with mild symptoms
- Any athlete or staff member that is required to leave a training session as a consequence of experiencing signs or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 is required to contact their physician to consider the appropriateness of further investigations. Further investigations may include a test for COVID-19, which then may lead to the notification of appropriate public health officials regarding a positive test result. Public health officials will determine any requirements related to facility and/or group operations, as well as any requirements around contact tracing as it relates to managing the spread of the virus. The athlete or staff member may not return until receiving clearance from the physician, and if a test for COVID-19 was completed, a negative test result will be required before further training is permitted. If home isolation is required, guidelines have been provided in a subsequent section below.
- Staff or athletes at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to review their specific health concerns with their primary care provider prior to attending training sessions.
 - Common underlying health conditions which may place an individual at higher risk would include hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, chronic respiratory diseases such as asthma and those who are otherwise immunocompromised.

Returning to Training following a positive COVID-19 test

The decision on when it is appropriate to return to training following a positive COVID-19 test will require medical advice and clearance by the attending physician and in accordance with Provincial guidelines. Recommendations will vary based on a number of factors and may include further testing in some cases. Please seek the advice of your health care practitioner.

Home Isolation Recommendations

If you find yourself ill with symptoms suggestive of COVID-19,

- Remain at home except to get urgent medical care.
- Do not go to work, school, pool or other public places.
- Cancel non urgent appointments.
- Do not use public transport.
- Notify your doctor or local health department by phone, as testing may be required.
- Monitor your symptoms and seek medical attention if you are having difficulty breathing, are unable to drink fluids, or if your illness is significantly worsening.

- Wear a face masks when around others, particularly when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Separate from household members, at least 2 meters at all times.
- Do not have visitors.
- Stay in a well ventilated room (open windows) and use your own bathroom if possible.
- Sanitize common use surfaces frequently.
- If close contacts are vulnerable in terms of their health, consider alternative accommodations.
- Avoid sharing household items.
- Maintain excellent hand hygiene.
- Follow any other local health regulations

Physical Distancing

- Avoid being exposed to COVID-19 by physical distancing (minimum 2 meters). Keep a safe distance at all times. **This is critical as COVID-19 can be spread prior to symptom onset.**
- Avoid crowded places.
- Avoid greetings with handshakes, hugging, high fives, etc...
- Athletes and staff must respect physical distancing during all aspects of training.
- Athletes, coaches and staff may consider the use of protective masks. Masks should be considered when physical distancing isn't always possible such as on public transit on the way to training, crowded areas, and for those with chronic medical conditions. Remember that using a mask is not enough alone and should be combined with other preventative measures such as frequent hand washing and consistent physical distancing.
- Provide facility access with one entry point and a separate exit point.
 - If both entry and exit points are located at the same place, put in place measures that provide physical distancing of at least 2 meters.
 - Install signage to direct athletes, coaches, and staff to enter one at a time.
 - Provide floor markings to guide athletes, coaches, and staff movements through and out of the facility.
- Install physical markers on the floor or walls (cones, lines, stickers, wooden structures, etc.) that indicate appropriate two meters spacing distances for athletes, coaches, and staff working on deck or in dryland areas.
- Coaches and staff must maintain appropriate distance from each other and facility staff members throughout the entire duration of time spent in the facility.
- Athletes should arrive in their training suit.
- Showers should be mandatory only if a shower is available near the pool deck (without the need to enter the changing room).
 - Athletes should encourage good pool hygiene by showering at home before and after a session
- To maintain physical distancing of 2 meters the number of athletes must be modified depending on the activities programmed in the aquatic facility.
- Keep the same group of athletes for each training session
 - High Performance Centre and Senior Team athletes may relocate from within Canada to train with a resident group upon review and approval from the National Sport Federation National Team Physician and in line with provincial and municipal travel regulations.

- Other athletes looking to relocate to train with a resident group (e.g. University Team) must follow all provincial and municipal regulations related to travel along with any Provincial Section guidelines that may be in place.
 - Athletes should only participate in one training group and should not move between multiple training groups.
- Do not perform dry land training at the pool. Any dryland or pre-pool should be performed before entering the facility.
- Do not arrive any earlier than necessary for receiving the training session and entering the pool.
- At this time, physical therapy treatments (which includes hands-on services provided by massage therapists physiotherapists, chiropractors, athletic therapists and strength and conditioning practitioners) are higher risk and such support services are not recommended. Other virtual and non-contact means of providing feedback and therapy advice should be considered as alternatives to physical treatment.
- Spectators/parents to follow facility rules and are expected to adhere to the physical distancing rules.
- Athletes are encouraged to act responsibly and promote appropriate behavior on social media with their peers.

Hand and Personal Hygiene

- Clean/wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitizer (>60% alcohol). Coaches and athletes are encouraged to carry a personal supply of hand sanitizer for use as needed before, during and after training.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- On arrival, athletes, coaches, and staff must wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer for at least 20 seconds.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or the crease of your elbow when you sneeze or cough.
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Do not share food and drinks.

Use of Equipment

- Clean equipment thoroughly with a disinfectant pre and post training session. Remember that COVID-19 can last between two hours and nine days on surfaces depending on a number of factors. Simple cleaning measures can inactivate the virus.
- Athletes are not to leave equipment or mesh bags at the facility. All equipment needs to be brought home and thoroughly cleaned after each training session.
- Personal items and clothing (backpacks, jackets, shoes, etc.) brought in by athletes, coaches, and staff should be kept to a minimum. Where bags must be brought in, they should be stored separately, with adequate space between each member's items (re: backpacks left 2 meters apart along pool deck).
- Limit the amount of equipment to be brought into the pool throughout the return to sport process. The coach is required to communicate necessary training equipment prior to each session.
- There is no permitted sharing of water bottles. Athletes, coaches, and staff are required to fill their personal water bottles at home, prior to a leaving for the facility.

- Coaches are not permitted to use whiteboards so that athletes do not congregate around them. Use other means of communicating the training sessions to the players
- Coaches are not permitted to share hand-held equipment such as clipboards or pens, with colleagues or others. Reminder to clean this equipment with disinfecting wipes pre and post training session.
- In general, pool set-up such as putting in lane lines should be left to the facility to complete. Where this is not possible, specific protocols should be developed and hand washing should occur before and after setting up the equipment.

Safe Sport

- All efforts should be made to ensure that Open and Observable environments are maintained at all times. Open and observable environments means making meaningful and concerted efforts to avoid situations where a coach, official or other representative might be alone with an athlete and/or vulnerable individual. All interactions between an athlete and an individual who is in a position of trust should normally, and wherever possible, be in an environment or space that is both “open” and “observable” to others.
- All training sessions shall respect the principles outlined in the Coaching Association of Canada’s Responsible Coaching Movement including the Rule of Two.

Return to Sport – Water Polo Training Guidelines

4-STEP RETURN TO TRAINING GUIDELINES				
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Canada Public Health	<u>PHYSICAL DISTANCING APPLIED</u>		<u>NO PHYSICAL DISTANCING</u>	
Travel Restrictions	Limited inter-region & inter-province travel only			Domestic travel permitted
Training Location	Personal swimming pool OR Open water	Use of open water & lakes Training within facilities and public pools Must maintain physical distancing.	Training within facilities NO physical distancing	
Training Options	In-water training (solo) if access to own pool only, or open water.	Training with limited members, small sub-groups and distance of 2 meters maintained. Swimming, throwing (passing/shooting) and other technical drills can be completed. No full contact/defending drills, wrestling, scrimmage Equipment must be disinfected incl. balls after each segment *See below for further details	Full training and competition regionally (within provinces) Small group competition allowed (<i>Local teams with no fans</i>)	Full training and competition domestically Large group competition allowed (<i>Normal competition with fans</i>)

STEP 2 – Supporting Guidelines

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS	
Public Health	Public Health guidelines must be followed at all times.
Arrival Procedures	All participants should consider wearing masks outside of the pool during transit to and from the facility while ensuring they wash their hands or use hand sanitizer for 20 seconds upon arrival at the facilities. Work creatively with facility managers to create an entry and exit plan that maintains physical distancing and minimizes transition time. Athletes or staff with symptoms or roommates with symptoms <u>should not be</u> permitted to attend training until cleared by a doctor.
Sanitation Procedures	Participants will wipe down equipment after every use.
Offices or Shared Spaces	Staff will wash hands before entering office and wipe down after its use. No sharing of office supplies. Limit number of people within the office depending on size and respecting 2m distancing.

Equipment	Equipment must be wiped down at the before and at the end of each training session (balls, nets etc.)
Team Meetings	Team meetings should be held by Zoom (or similar platform) or in open space that allows for physical distancing

AQUATIC TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS	
Participants in the pool	<p>Athletes in the pool require roughly 12.56 sq. to ensure they can practice 2m distance in the water.</p> <p>The following recommendations can be made for swimming pool sizes and adjusted based on different pool configurations to allow for physical distancing.</p> <p>25m x 25m – 12 athletes or less</p> <p>25m x 30m – 15 athletes or less</p> <p>25m x 50m – 20 athletes or less</p> <p><i>*Note the recommendations above can be adapted based on the space available within facilities</i></p>
Personal Bins on Pool Deck (optional)	All sport related equipment should be sanitized and left at the pool, athletes can be given their own personal bin or box on the pool deck for sport related equipment such as bathing caps, goggles, WP hats, etc.
Change area &	Athletes can arrive in their training suit and be given a bin on deck to put their clothes, or they can pass through the locker room in a staggered fashion while respecting physical distancing and arrive on the pool deck with a towel only.
Interactions between Team Members	2 m distance maintained at all times.
Warm up	<p>Limit dry land training on the pool deck. Any dryland or pre-pool activities should be performed before entering the facility.</p> <p>Options of completing warm up can be done outdoors in open air or in another location if permitted.</p>
Hydration	Only water personal water bottles on deck, <u>no food allowed.</u>
Toilet	Sanitation measures after use by each person – facility specific rules should apply
Swim training	Can be conducted using every second lane, can be subgroups or rotating groups in the water with swimming/static technical work.
Individual ball or technical skills	2 meters + distance for horizontal drills
Passing & Shooting	Shooting open net, on a board, on rebounded, passing with partners or subgroups respecting 2 m distance, and shooting on goalie
Duels/ opposition - close contact work	Not permitted
Close contact situational activities, or scrimmages	
Cool Down	Can be completed in pool respecting 2m distance, it is advised to be complete this at home.
Post Training Meetings	Team meetings should be held by Zoom (or similar platform) or in open space that allows for physical distancing