



# RETURN to HOCKEY

COVID-19 RESPONSE

## Hockey Canada Safety Program (HTCP in Ontario)

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COVID-19 INFORMATION



# Messages from Hockey Canada

Since early March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every province and territory in Canada and a great many in and outside the hockey community.

As hockey prepares for the upcoming hockey season, it continues to be important to be familiar with public health authority guidelines and adhere to these requirements. Public health authority guidelines will always supersede any general recommendation of Hockey Canada adopted by the Members.

As a Safety Person or Trainer with your team it is important that you help to ensure that coaches, participants, and parents for your team are familiar with the most up to date information possible on COVID-19 and its prevention. The following links will provide updates from the Public Health Agency of Canada and within your Province or Territory.

Public Health Agency of Canada COVID-19 Information and Guidelines

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Provincial/Territorial COVID-19 Information and Guidelines

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms/provincial-territorial-resources-covid-19.html>



Hockey Canada's goal is to provide you with a clear understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on hockey and to connect you with the most up-to-date information available to help facilitate a safe involvement in hockey for your team. At the same time, please keep in mind that public health authority advice continues to evolve and it's important as a safety person or trainer with your team to keep updated on these changes.

Dr Mark Aubry, Chief Medical Officer, Hockey Canada



# What is COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.<sup>1</sup>

The symptoms of COVID-19 vary from person to person, in different age groups and can depend on the COVID-19 variant according to the Public Health Agency of Canada. It is important to be aware that someone may not have symptoms but still be infected and may spread the virus to others. This stresses the importance of incorporating prevention steps in the hockey environment on an ongoing basis.

## COVID-19 Variants

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, will naturally develop mutations, which are changes to the genetic material in the virus over time. When there have been several significant mutations to the virus then it's called a variant. A variant is of concern when it affects:

- disease spread
- disease severity (for example, whether you have mild symptoms or require hospital care)
- tests used to detect the virus
- protection from previous infection, vaccines or treatments

The presence of variants is one of the reasons continuing with prevention steps in the hockey environment is important.<sup>2</sup>

## How COVID-19 Spreads

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, spreads from an infected person to others through respiratory droplets and aerosols for example when an infected person:

- breathes,
- coughs,
- sneezes,
- sings,
- shouts,
- talks.

The droplets vary in size, from large droplets that fall to the ground rapidly (within seconds or minutes) near the infected person, to smaller droplets, sometimes called aerosols, which linger in the air, especially in indoor spaces. The virus may also spread when a person touches another person (i.e., a handshake) or a surface or an object (also referred to as a fomite) that has the virus on it, and then touches their mouth, nose or eyes with unwashed hands.<sup>2</sup>



# What are the Symptoms of COVID-19

Most infected people will develop mild to moderate symptoms and recover without hospitalization but as a safety person or trainer it is important that you advise a team member that is showing symptoms that if the symptoms are serious they seek immediate medical attention.

## Some of the more commonly reported symptoms include:

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Sneezing
- Temperature equal to or more than 38°C
- Chills
- Fatigue or weakness
- Muscle or body aches
- New loss of smell or taste
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Headache
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea and vomiting
- Feeling very unwell
- Skin rash, or discoloration of fingers and toes

## Serious symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain or pressure
- Loss of speech or movement

**On average, it takes 2-5 days from infection for symptoms to show.**

**Seek immediate medical attention if you or a team member has serious symptoms. It is important to advise the person to call before visiting their health care provider or health facility.**

# Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in the Hockey Environment

As the Safety Person or Trainer for your team you play a crucial role in ensuring the health and safety of the players and team staff, and in helping to create a safe and welcoming environment. Part of this includes preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the hockey environment.

It's important to remember that even as more and more people are vaccinated COVID-19 may continue to be present in your community.

**Vaccines are a very important part of the layered prevention strategy and are very effective**, but they do not guarantee that you won't become infected by COVID-19, or that you will not transmit COVID-19 to others. You will still need to follow key public health authority prevention guidelines and may need to use a variety of preventative practices depending on the community you are in including:

- Physical distancing
- Wearing of masks
- Minimizing non -essential interactions with people
- Avoiding crowded places
- Maintaining hand hygiene
- Coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the bend of your arm, not your hand (even if wearing a mask)

**Always follow the guidelines of the Public Health Authority, Hockey Canada, your Hockey Canada Member and hockey association, and the facility you play in.**

# Important COVID-19 Prevention Steps

The following outlines important steps in the prevention of COVID-19 in the hockey environment.

## Pre-Season Meetings

At the beginning of the season or prior to a team trip to a hockey event such as a tournament the Safety Person or trainer should meet with team Parents/Guardians/Participants and:

- Provide an overview of what to expect with respect to guidelines in place within the team and within the facility/event you will be participating in.
- If traveling to another community to familiarize them on the COVID-19 landscape within that community and any restrictions in place by local public health.
- Their role in creating a safe and healthy environment.
- If players are arriving at the hockey activity partially dressed in their equipment, it is important to advise them to follow guidelines specific to car seats and seat belts. It would be recommended to wear only equipment that can be worn safely under current laws or guidelines while sitting in a car seat or while wearing a seatbelt. When player safety might be compromised by riding in a car seat fully dressed in hockey equipment, the child should leave home partially dressed in their equipment, and should put on the remainder of the equipment after arriving at the facility.

## Team Social Activities

- Before and after games and practices there are opportunities that present themselves such as group meals and group socializing.
- Hockey Canada strongly recommends that these types of gatherings be very closely assessed and avoided if there is any question as to their safety. These types of gatherings should only take place if they comply with public health authority and Member guidelines.
- Even with vaccines it is important to realize that in order to reduce the possibility of the spread of COVID-19 and to keep the hockey environment and the community healthy these types of gatherings need to be controlled.

## Masks

**Continue to monitor public health authority, facility, and  
Member guidelines specific to wearing masks.**

**Important information on masks can be found at**

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/prevention-risks/about-non-medical-masks-face-coverings.html>

- It is recommended anyone entering the facility or attending a team event should wear a mask (it may also be required by the public health authority and/or the facility). The mask can be removed by players while participating in an on-ice hockey activity.
- Coaches and team staff should wear masks in the facility at all times including, in the dressing room, on the bench and on the ice during practice.
- Masks should be worn for all non-exerting warm-ups/cool-downs off ice.
- Wearing a mask alone will not prevent the spread of COVID-19. You must consistently and strictly adhere to good hygiene and public health measures, including frequent hand washing and physical distancing.

## Team Hygiene

### Players Prevention Kits

Encourage players and parents to bring the following with them to the team event.

- Small personal packages of tissue
- Small bottle of hand sanitizer
- Mask to wear when required
- Small package of disinfectant wipes
- Thermometer
- Emergency numbers for public health and their family physician

- Emphasize to participants the importance of strict hand hygiene before and after training. If possible, players should be encouraged to carry hand sanitizer. For useful information on hand hygiene click here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/reduce-spread-covid-19-wash-your-hands.html>
- When coughing or sneezing, cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of the arm, not the hand.
  - Dispose of any tissues as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash hands.
  - Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
- Players should have a labelled water bottle. Use only that water bottle when participating in the activity. Parents/players should wash water bottles after each session.
- Control the number of times players enter and exit dressing rooms, as this avoids contact with the door handles. Use the elbow to open.
- Absolutely no sharing of drinks or food.
- Towels should only be on the bench under the guidance of the safety person/trainer and for emergency use only. A towel should only be used once and not shared, and then taken off the bench and washed.
- Emphasize to all participants that spitting and blowing the nose without tissue is absolutely forbidden.
- It is prohibited for officials to drink from the goaltender's water bottle. If officials require water, they should have their own water bottle at the penalty bench.
- There should not be sharing of water bottles in the penalty box, as well as no sharing of towels.
- Pre-game and post-game handshakes should be eliminated.
- Players should not share clothing, soap, shampoo or other personal items such as razors and towels.
- Some equipment should be washed (jerseys, pant shells, socks) after each training session following manufacturer guidelines. It is important that players ensure all equipment is kept clean.
- If doing dryland training or pre/post activity stretching, players should ensure physical distancing.
- Ensure to practice physical distancing when possible during all team activities.
- Players and staff should be reminded to disinfect their phones regularly.

## Tournaments and Away Events

**All participants, coaching staff and patrons must adhere to public health authority guidelines. Remember to review guidelines for any provincial/territorial or international destination other than your own that you will be visiting. Note that guidelines may restrict the ability to host local tournaments and team travel.**

Monitor travel restrictions at Travel Advice and Advisories - [Travel.gc.ca](https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories)  
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

- When at the team event encourage your players, parents and team staff to stay within their team and practice physical distancing as much as possible.
- Consider a plan if a team player or staff needs to isolate at the location you are in.
- If the team is using a bus reduce the chance of COVID-19 transmission as much as possible.
  - The bus should be professionally cleaned and disinfected prior to each trip. It is recommended to discuss with the bus company what their cleaning procedures are.
  - Discuss with the bus company the importance of following all public health authority guidelines and clarify the bus companies COVID-19 guidelines.
  - The bus driver must be last on and first off the bus.
  - Avoid team members sitting directly beside each other if possible.
  - Players and staff should clean and disinfect their seat and surface area with provided disinfectant wipes after each stop and prior to each departure.
  - Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players board and disembark, and team members should wash their hands as they board and disembark.
  - Have proper waste disposals on the bus to discard used disinfectant wipes.
  - It is recommended all passengers including the driver wear a mask.
  - It is recommended to have a barrier between the driver and the passengers.
  - Teams should request increased air circulation/ventilation on the bus. This can include opening windows on the bus when possible.
  - If using the washroom on the bus ensure to wear a mask and wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol based hand sanitizer afterwards.
  - Try to avoid unnecessary stops.
  - If traveling internationally players and staff should carry their own passports and should have masks available. If required to report inside a customs building, players and staff should do so using physical-distancing guidelines and wearing a mask.

## Tournaments and Away Events

- If the team is staying in a hotel ensure to clarify the hotels COVID-19 guidelines prior to leaving for your trip and advise all team members and parents. Practice the following best practice steps amongst your team:
  - Avoid using hotel supplied glasses, coffee pots etc. in rooms and bring a supply of disposable glasses with you.
  - Eliminate team buffets. Individual meals should be considered. Beverages should be single-serve and not jug-style service.
  - Remember physical-distancing requirements prior to considering any type of meal.
  - If eating at a restaurant, follow applicable public health authority guidelines.
  - Avoid visiting other team members guestrooms, meet where physical distancing is possible.
  - It is recommended to ask that there not be housekeeping in your room during your stay.
  - Only the number of people to allow you to be 2 meters apart should be on the elevator at one time, and wash hands after using your fingers to select your floor. Avoid lingering in the elevator and keep talking to a minimum. Masks must be worn at all times on the elevator and hands should be washed or sanitized after exiting.
  - It is recommended masks be worn in the hotel except while in your guest room.
  - In your room, wipe down high touch surfaces such as door handles, light switches, phones and television converters with disinfectant wipes.

## Facility Reminders

During all phases of the pandemic and use of facilities, a spirit of ongoing patience, flexibility and appreciation for each party will need to be communicated between your team and the facility owner (and their representatives). Positive interaction and increased understanding will be required as facility owners respond to government and public health authority direction on a variety of operational practices. At times, facility owners may adopt additional operational practices that are site specific and they will need to be recognized by your team and as a safety person or trainer you need to work to ensure your team follows facility guidelines.

# Signs of Sickness/Return to Hockey

**The following are recommended guidelines for team staff, parents and guardians for participants who are sick or showing symptoms of COVID-19. It is important to remember that public health authority guidelines and advice from health care providers must be followed in any situation where a participant is sick.**

- If a participant does not feel well prior to coming to a hockey event, has a fever or a cold they should stay home until the symptoms improve and advise the coach or the team safety person/trainer. Furthermore, if the participant tests positive for COVID-19 they must follow the recommendations and restrictions of their local public health authority.
- If participants do not feel well or have cold/ COVID-19 symptoms while at a hockey activity, ensure they advise team staff immediately and put on a mask (note the team staff interacting with the player should also wear a mask). They should immediately go home and follow up with their health care provider. They should not return to the hockey environment until all applicable steps outlined by their health care provider and/or public health authority are completed and they are symptom free for 24 hours.

## Reminders for Safety Person/Trainer

*If you or any team members are feeling ill or have suspected or confirmed COVID-19, follow the direction of your health care provider and public health authority and do not come into the hockey environment.*

*All team staff should follow the instructions of your public health authority if you are notified that you have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.*

### Safety Person/Trainer

- Ensure the health and safety of the players and help to create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Advise players and parents that a prevention kit, as identified on page 9, is a good idea.
- Educate parents and players on the need for each player to have their own water bottle labelled with their names. Players should bring the bottles pre-filled and take their water bottles home to be washed before the next session.
- Emphasize to players the importance of washing their hands regularly with soap and water or hand sanitizer. Carry extra hand sanitizer, masks and disinfectant wipes in the first-aid kit.



- Emphasize to players the importance of keeping their equipment clean
- Ensure towels are only on the bench under the guidance of the safety person or trainer, and for emergency use only. A towel should only be used once and not shared and then taken off the bench and washed.
- Emphasize to players and parents the need for total cooperation concerning hygiene.
- Work with coaches to support physical distancing, hygiene, and return to play after illness.
- Wear gloves when handling equipment. The safety person or trainer should wear non-latex gloves when treating a player and when on the bench for practices and games.
- Wash hands and change gloves between each player contact.
- Masks should be worn at all times while in the facility, including when treating players and dealing with players' equipment in the dressing room and on the bench.
- *Remind your coaches and team managers:*
  - COVID-19 conditions are different across the country and to assess the current situation in their province or territory to help build programming that fits.
  - Host a meeting with parents, guardians, and participants to review how programming will look and answer questions. Depending on the current situation, it may be necessary to host a virtual meeting.
  - Minimize congregation and stress physical distancing in all areas of the facility as much as possible.
  - Where possible, split the players into groups and have them space appropriately as they enter the ice.
  - Remind players and parents to follow physical distancing guidelines when leaving.
  - If dressing rooms are available, respect all facility controls as related to dressing rooms so adequate cleaning and disinfecting can be done.
  - When using dressing rooms, have players remain physically distanced. Utilizing multiple dressing rooms could help.
  - Follow facility guidelines related to the use of showers. If arena showers are used, physical distancing must be followed.
  - When parents need to assist players with equipment, limit the number of parents in the dressing room or change area at any one time to one per player. Physical distancing requirements must be adhered to.
  - And follow Hockey Canada and Member guidelines for best practices related to on- and off-ice activities.

- *Remind your team players of the following*
  - Always respect and listen to team staff as they work to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
  - Minimize going in and out of doors, including dressing room doors. Facility doors are considered high-risk touchpoints. Use your elbow to open doors whenever possible.
  - Never share food or drinks.
  - Assist the coach in following required guidelines during hockey activities both on and off the ice.
  - When coughing or sneezing:
    - Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the bend of your arm, not your hand.
    - Dispose of used tissues as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands.
    - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Wear a mask when in the facility. Masks can be removed when participating on the ice.
  - Avoid contact with anyone who is sick.
  
- *Remind your team parents of the following:*
  - Talk to your kids about the importance of preventing COVID-19 in the hockey environment, including physical distancing guidelines.
  - Stress washing of hands before leaving for hockey, before going into a facility, after using the washroom, after the hockey activity, and after leaving the facility.
  - Stress to your kids not to touch their faces, including their eyes, nose, and mouth, with unclean hands.
  - Make sure your kids let you know if they're not feeling well. Never come to the hockey environment ill.
  - Make sure your kids have their own clean and prefilled water bottle, labelled clearly with their name, and stress the importance of not sharing water bottles.
  - Wear a mask in the facility.
  - If traveling, review public health authority guidelines for any province, territory, or international destination that will be visited.
  - If staying at a hotel, consider the recommendations outlined in the Team Hygiene section.

# Junior Hockey

The following are additional reminders to Safety People and Trainers that may be involved at the Junior Hockey levels. Note that the guidelines and recommendations in the sections above also apply.

## Facility Meeting

Prior to starting the team's season, reach out to your home facility and discuss the following:

- Facility guidelines and requirements specific to physical distancing.
- Restrictions specific to the number of people allowed in public areas.
- Areas that may not be accessible in the facility – main lobby, dressing rooms, observation areas, showers, washrooms, etc.
- Cleaning processes in the facility, including how often it is disinfected.
- General facility rules specific to practicing good hygiene.

## Team Dressing Room

- When public health authority protocol and facility guidelines allow use of dressing rooms, teams should have players appropriately physically distanced (using multiple dressing rooms could help).
- Dressing rooms should be cleaned and sanitized (all surfaces and fitness equipment) after each use.
- Hockey equipment, including sticks and pucks, should be cleaned after each practice and game.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players enter and leave.
- Media interviews should be conducted outside the dressing room in a dedicated area with proper physical-distancing procedures.
- Access to the dressing room should be strictly monitored.
- Only team personnel, on-ice officials, medical staff and essential facility staff should have access.
- Teams exiting the facility should do so as soon as possible after their session.

## Off-Ice Training Areas

- Physical distancing should be used to determine the number of players permitted in the weight room or workout area at one time.
- Equipment should be wiped down with disinfectant wipes after each use.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players enter and leave. Hands should be washed upon entering and when exiting off-ice training areas.
- Masks should be worn for all non-exerting warm-ups/cool-downs.

## Medical Rooms

- Physical distancing should be used to determine number of players in the medical room at one time.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players enter and leave. Players should wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer prior to entering and after exiting the medical room.
- Medical rooms should be disinfected between player treatments.
- Masks should be worn at all times while in the medical room.
- Protective surgical masks and gloves should be available.

## Billets

- Billet locations are required to follow public health authority guidelines.
- Teams need to consider players coming from out of their province/territory or from out of Canada and if any necessary quarantine periods upon arrival are in place.
- Billets should be required to complete a mandatory season-opening COVID-19 screening survey.
- Billets and players should practice physical distancing.
- Masks should be available for players and billet families.

## Team Meals

- Players and staff must wash hands before and after each meal.
- Hotels must have a private room to serve meals to players and staff. Buffet-style food services should be avoided.
- Players and staff should not share food or drink at any time.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available as players enter and leave.
- Players and staff can remove their mask while eating, but masks should be worn while walking around the meal room.
- After eating teams should clear their own dishes to avoid hotel staff traffic.

## Practices/Warm-Ups/Games

- Players and staff must have their own personal towel if showering.
- Players and staff must have their own water bottles (cleaned after each practice and game).
- Additional towels and a laundry basket must be available (towels replaced after each usage).
- Players should warm-up for games individually as opposed to in groups.
- Tissues and a waste basket should be available.
- Hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes should be available.
- Cleaning of jerseys, face shields and mouthguards must take place before and after every game.

## Benches

- Work with facility staff to ensure the bench area is wiped down and disinfected after each session.
- Non-latex gloves and disinfectant wipes should be available on benches for players and staff.
- Ensure a garbage can or plastic garbage bag is available on the bench.
- All bench staff should wear masks while on the bench. Physical distancing should be practiced as much as possible.

## Trainers & Equipment Staff

- Gloves must be worn when handling equipment.
- Non-latex gloves must be worn when on the bench for each practice and game.
- Masks should be worn at all times in the facility including when treating players, when dealing with players' equipment, in the dressing room and on the bench.
- Gloves must be changed when required and hands must be washed frequently.
- Hands must be washed and gloves changed between each player contact.

## Therapists & Medical Staff

- Gloves must be worn for all practices and games.
- Hands must be washed and gloves changed between each player contact.
- Masks should be worn at all times when in the facility including when treating players, when dealing with players' equipment, in the dressing room and on the bench.

# Why these actions are still important

Following these actions remains important for many reasons. COVID-19 will continue to spread at different levels in our communities, and outbreaks will still occur. New variants of concern may also emerge.

There's also uncertainty around how long immunity from vaccination and previous infection lasts. Some settings will continue to be higher risk, including crowded and poorly ventilated public spaces.

## References

1. World Health Organization
2. Public Health Agency of Canada Website



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