

# FACT SHEET

## Considerations for Planning Physical Activity at School during COVID-19

Schools should be aware of the risks associated with COVID-19 and protective measures for planning physical activity and physical education (PA & PE). Safe, accessible, and fun physical activity is possible with a little planning and creativity. When determining the types of activities to include as part of a PA & PE program consider potential risks and procedures related to the facility/location, equipment, physical distancing, and instructional strategies that can be used to reduce the overall risk and support the safe return to physical education.

### Location/Facility:

- Ideally, plan for outdoor activities:
  - » Consider all the outdoor spaces around the school that could be used (e.g., school yard, local park, if accessible on foot and permitted by school board).
  - » For tips and ideas for outdoor teaching and learning, including how to dress for the weather, consult **Thrive Outside – Resources for Educators**.
- If the activity takes place indoors:
  - » Students should be encouraged to wear a non-medical mask when participating in low or moderate intensity activities (e.g. yoga, volleyball).
    - Consult your school board mask policy.
    - Ensure students bring additional clean masks so they can change their mask if soiled, wet, or humid.
    - If students cannot tolerate wearing a mask during moderate or vigorous physical activity (e.g., running, aerobics), consider moving these activities outdoors.
    - **NOTE: A mask is not a substitute for physical distancing. Physical distancing must still be promoted even when students and staff are wearing a mask.**
  - » Ensure good ventilation. If it is safe and appropriate to do so, open doors and windows for air flow.
  - » Ensure the space is large enough to allow students and staff to physically distance.
  - » Modify the space to provide physical and/or visual cues for physical distancing (e.g., tape, pylons and signs on walls).
- If using a community facility:
  - » Follow all COVID-19 protocols – ensure you are meeting school board policies AND public health guidelines.

### Considerations for change rooms:

- If appropriate, students should come to school dressed in clothing suitable for physical activity to eliminate the use of change rooms.
- If change rooms are required, ensure the size of the group is limited to make sure students can maintain physical distancing. Consider staggering the use of change rooms to ensure physical distancing (use same sub-cohorts, teams, or groupings from classroom cohort to limit exposure).
- To facilitate physical distancing, you may need to block off alternating lockers, showers, and other amenities.
- Change rooms should be cleaned and disinfected frequently. Showers may only open if they are cleaned and disinfected between users.

### Physical Distancing & Limiting Contacts

- Ensure no body contact and physical distancing of at least 2 meters between people (students and staff) is always being promoted and facilitated (during play; in changes rooms; during instruction; and even when wearing masks).
- Start with individual activities:
  - » Focus on activities that promote the development of fundamental movement skills, sport skills, and personal fitness.
    - For tips and ideas consult Ophea's **Learn to Move, Fundamental Movement Skills poster series**.
- For team sports:
  - » Focus on skills and strategies that can be done individually or in small groups.
  - » Plan team sports with modifications to promote physical distancing at all times. Examples of modifications may include, but are not limited to:
    - Start with individual practice and gradually progress towards group play or scrimmages and games only once students and staff are comfortable with playing while maintaining physical distancing.

- Eliminate or modify face-offs.
- Reduce the number of players per team.
- Increase the size of play area.
- Ensure a minimum number of passes before a player can score.
- Enforce a rule for interceptions only to gain possession of the play (rather than getting in close to a player).
- » For considerations and tips on modifying play for team sports during COVID-19, consult the various **Provincial** or **National** sport organizations.
- » Create sub-cohorts, teams, or groupings within your classroom cohort for a period of time (e.g., semester) to build enthusiasm as well as keep student groupings small and consistent.

### Equipment:

- Activities with no equipment or limited equipment are ideal.
- If equipment is used:
  - » Limit or avoid sharing of equipment.
  - » Equipment that is used must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use; the equipment should not be handled after disinfection.
    - Ensure equipment can be easily cleaned and disinfected.
    - Items such as mobile carts, bins, and equipment bags can be used to easily transport equipment between areas without having to touch the equipment.
    - To limit loss of instructional time, consider keeping extra equipment on hand to replace equipment that has been touched by other students. Equipment can be disinfected at the end of the class/day.
  - » Consider assigning equipment to each student (e.g., numbering equipment).
  - » Train students and staff on how to properly clean and disinfect the equipment. Ensure supplies are readily available.
- If equipment is shared:
  - » Focus on activities that promote minimal hand and contact with equipment. (e.g., hockey, lacrosse).
  - » Modify the rules of play to avoid unnecessary hand/or face contact (e.g., replacing throw-ins by kick-ins and not allowing headers in soccer).
- If equipment is shared and hand contact cannot be avoided:
  - » Prioritize activities where equipment is shared by a lower number of students (e.g., tennis, badminton).
  - » Ensure students and staff have frequent opportunities to clean and/or sanitize their hands before and after sharing equipment.
  - » Remind students not to touch their eyes, nose, mouth, and face.

### Instruction:

- Include students in the decision-making process. Ensure student voices, ideas, and perspectives are considered in planning lessons and activities. Consult **PHE Canada's COVID-19 Pandemic: Return to School Canadian Physical and Health Education Guidelines**.
- Talk to students and discuss why the public health measures – such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, wearing a mask, respiratory etiquette, and more – are important for reducing the spread of the virus during physical activity.

### Contact Us

#### **Eastern Ontario Health Unit:**

- **[EOHU.ca/coronavirus](https://eohu.ca/coronavirus)**
- **[School and Childcare During COVID-19](#)**
- **[Physical Education and Physical Activity in Schools During COVID-19](#)**
- Contact your public health nurse or email the Health Unit's physical activity team at [sportsdesk@eohu.ca](mailto:sportsdesk@eohu.ca)

#### **Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit:**

- **[COVID-19 and Schools](#)** and **[Educators -Active Living resources for Schools](#)**
- **[COVID-19 Return to Sport](#)** and **[COVID-19 Return to Recreation](#)**
- Contact your Public Health Nurse at 1-866-236-0123.

*Adapted from Ophea and PHE Canada.*

1-866-236-0123  
[www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)



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