

Athletic and Performance Guidance for Schools

SUMMARY

Organized sports, like other activities where participants gather and interact in close proximity across households, pose COVID-19 risks. Sports where a face mask cannot be safely worn pose higher risks than sports where participants can wear face masks throughout play. Depending on local orders and community transmission rates, sports and performing arts may need certain mitigation measures to avoid exposing participants to unacceptable infection risk and risk of accelerated virus transmission in their communities.

MDHHS Current Recommended Mitigation Measures for Athletics:

- Wear face masks while participating in organized sports indoors or contact sports unless mask use poses a safety hazard.
- Screen for symptoms before play or practice and avoid sports activities if you have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Wash hands frequently and cover coughs and sneezes.
- Use separate equipment as much as possible. Frequently clean and disinfect any shared equipment and surfaces.
- Prioritize outdoor practice and play as much as possible.

Ingham County Mandatory Provisions

- [Ingham County Epidemic Order 2021-2](#) requires masks be worn at all times while in a K-12 education setting. Further, [Ingham County Epidemic Order 2021-3](#) details requirements for isolation and quarantine in educational settings.
- Based on MDHHS current recommendations for athletics, as well as the need for continuity of educational programming for performing arts, the following exception may be used by districts. The exception only applies if the district is complying with Athletic and Performance Guidance for Schools.
- Athletes or those in performing arts may utilize antigen testing to perform without a mask during practice, competition (if a mask poses a safety hazard) or performances.
 - Fully vaccinated athletes or performers are not required to participate in testing. However, testing for fully vaccinated athletes is strongly recommended.
 - Antigen testing must be completed the day of or prior to (within 12 hours) of the competition or performance.
 - Athletes and performers may remove masks only while actively practicing, competing (e.g. on the court) or performing and will wear masks for example while on the bench, sidelines, or “behind stage.”
 - If it is a competition or performance involving other teams or schools, all those competing or performing should agree to utilize the testing strategy in order to perform without a mask.
- All others attending the event would continue to be masked – testing is only for those in competition or performing.

Recommended Practices

1. Individuals should continue to wear face masks if it does not pose a safety hazard or interfere with the ability to perform.
2. For those students coming from outside of the Ingham County Health Department service area, it is highly recommended the student, team, or group complete a rapid test the day of, and prior to, the competition or performance.
3. Isolate or quarantine away from others if symptoms or exposure to COVID-19 following all requirements of the [EMERGENCY ORDER \(Ingham2021-3\) FOR CONTROL OF EPIDEMIC ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE ORDER IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS](#)
4. Practice Safer Individual Behaviors
 - Wash hands frequently and cover coughs and sneezes.
 - Do not share items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Use separate towels, clothing, or other items used to wipe faces or hands.
 - Individuals should use their own gear/equipment and minimize sharing equipment.
 - Individuals are encouraged to provide their own food, drinks, and/or water.
 - Refrain from handshakes, hugs, fist bumps, high fives or contact celebrations.
 - Refrain from spitting, chewing gum or tobacco in the event areas.
 - For younger participants, it may be beneficial for parents or other household members to monitor their children, make sure they follow social distancing and take other protective actions (e.g., younger children could sit with parents or caregivers instead of in a dugout or group area).
5. Clean and Disinfect Often
 - Ensure enough time between each practice or competition to allow for proper cleaning and disinfection of the facilities and shared equipment.
 - Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene practices for participants, spectators, and employees, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content, paper towels, and tissues.
 - Identify an adult staff member or volunteer to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment, particularly for any shared equipment or frequently touched surfaces.
 - When disinfecting, use products that meet EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2 and that are appropriate for the surface. Prior to wiping the surface, allow the disinfectant to sit for the necessary contact time recommended by the manufacturer. Train staff on proper cleaning procedures to ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
 - Provide individual disinfectant wipes in bathrooms.
6. Choose Safer Options for Practices and Competitions for Unvaccinated Individuals
 - Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
 - If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to participants or others using the facility.

- Avoid areas with poor ventilation (weight rooms, small spaces, locker rooms) where social distancing cannot be implemented.
- Prioritize non-contact activity, like conditioning and drills, where social distancing can be maintained.
- Small groups may help reduce the risk of team wide COVID-19 outbreaks as they allow for greater social distancing, easier contact tracing, and reducing the number of participants that need to be quarantined.
- Minimize travel to other communities and regions for practices and competition.
- Limit the use of carpools, buses, or other shared transportation between all persons outside the same household. When riding in an automobile to a practice or competition, encourage individuals to ride with persons living in their same household. The Federal Government requires the use of masks by all in planes, trains, busses and other forms of communal transportation.

7. Safer Face Mask Considerations

- Adjusting the level and intensity of physical activity and taking frequent rest breaks can improve toleration of a face mask.
- Any face mask that becomes saturated with sweat should be changed immediately.

8. MDHHS is available support testing your participants and keeping your sports programs safe. Please visit MI Safer Sports Testing Program website for information including enrollment forms, antigen test result reporting, test order surveys, training videos, and FAQs. For additional resources on mitigation measures and resources available to participants and teams, please see the following links:

- [MDHHS COVID-19 Information and Resources for Athletics](#)
- [MDHHS Organized Sports Testing Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [MI Safer Sports Testing Program](#)
- [MDHHS Antigen Tests FAQ and Resources](#)
- [CDC: Sports Program FAQ](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance](#)