



COVID-19 and Athletics: What do I need to know as a health care provider?

Health care providers, particularly primary care providers, should be aware of recommendations and requirements for student-athletes to return to sports amid COVID-19. This abbreviated information includes links and references with further details.

The North Carolina High School Athletic Association's Modified Sports Manual outlines specific recommendations for 2020-21 regarding sports and COVID-19: www.nchsaa.org/2020-2021-nchsaa-modified-sports-manual

The North Carolina Independent High School Athletic Association provides information for private schools: www.ncisaa.org/health-and-safety/

Returning to Sports

Typically, preparticipation physical examinations (sports physicals) are required every 365 days with a 30-day grace period. For this year, an extension has been granted. Valid physical forms from the 2019-20 academic year will be good through the 2020-21 academic year.

COVID

SARS-CoV-2, the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, presents unique health issues that should be considered before student-athletes return to sports and exercise. While most young persons who are afflicted have mild symptoms or remain asymptomatic, the infection can cause direct injury or inflammation to the heart and lungs, especially in patients ill enough to require hospitalization.

ALL ATHLETES MUST COMPLETE A SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE BEFORE BEING ALLOWED TO RETURN TO SPORTS.

- If they indicate they tested positive for COVID or were treated presumptively for COVID (i.e. earlier in the year), they are required to be evaluated by a qualified medical professional (MD, DO, PA, NP).
- Recommendations for guidance on testing for patients based on degree of symptoms: <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamacardiology/fullarticle/2772399>
- For those who were positive but asymptomatic or had only mild symptoms (anosmia, ageusia, headache, mild fatigue, mild upper respiratory tract illness and mild GI illness/symptoms), at minimum there should be questions about any continued cardiac or pulmonary symptoms, or decreased exercise tolerance which may affect their ability to return to athletics and require further cardiac evaluation.

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COVID-19 Supplemental Questionnaire

Any positive response should trigger an evaluation by a medical provider.

Have you had any of the following symptoms in the past 2 weeks?

- Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Shaking chills
 - Chest pain, pressure or tightness with exercise
 - Fatigue or difficulty with exercise
 - Racing heart rate
 - Unusual dizziness
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - Sore throat
 - Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
 - Unusual rash or painful discoloration of fingers or toes
- Do you have a family or household member with current or past COVID-19?
 - Do you have moderate to severe asthma, a heart condition, diabetes, chronic kidney or liver disease, or take medication or have a medical condition that weakens your immune system?
 - Have you been diagnosed with or tested positive for COVID-19 infection?
 - Based on clinical judgment, most individuals testing positive for COVID-19 who are asymptomatic or minimally symptomatic will not need additional testing beyond a thorough clinical exam and targeted history that specifically evaluates for any cardiac or pulmonary symptoms the individual has experienced post-COVID infection.

Moving Forward with Sports

As a part of ongoing protocols, student-athletes will continue to be screened throughout the year.

Those who report a positive response on the daily monitoring questionnaire are ineligible for daily workouts, practices or contests and are not allowed to resume participation until evaluated by a qualified medical professional. They must also complete one of the following return-to-play (RTP) forms.

RTP form if it is felt that there is no indication for COVID testing, there is another attributable condition that would have caused their symptoms or they were isolated for 14 days due to close contact (but did not test positive): www.nchsaa.org/sites/default/files/attachments/NCHSAA-ReturntoPlayAfterIllness_Oct-27-2020.pdf

RTP form for athletes who are found to be COVID positive; before they can return, they must also complete their minimum of 10 days of isolation (or longer if deemed necessary):

www.nchsaa.org/sites/default/files/attachments/NCHSAA_SA_ReturntoPlay_PositiveCOVID19-Oct-27-2020.pdf

Form for coaches/staff: www.nchsaa.org/sites/default/files/attachments/NCHSAA_ReturnToDuty-Oct-27-2020.pdf

RTP form for private schools from the N.C. Independent High School Association:

www.ncisaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/NCISAA-COVID-19-GRTP-Form.pdf

We plan to alert providers as we learn more about the virus, associated conditions and recommendations regarding COVID-19. Please check these references periodically for updates.

Wake Forest Baptist Health Resources for Additional Information

Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine – Stratford: 336-716-8091

Orthopaedics and Sports Medicine – High Point: 336-905-6100

