



# RETURN **to** HOCKEY

COVID-19 RESPONSE



# Return to Hockey

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# Table of Contents

	Page
Section 1: Purpose	1
Section 2: Disclaimer	1
Section 3: Vaccinations	2
Section 4: Communications Officer	3
Section 5: Facilities	4
Facility Meeting	4
Facility Guidelines	5
Facility On-Ice Guidelines	6
Section 6: Hygiene	7
Public Health Authority Guidelines	7
Participant Meeting	8
Prior to Activity	8
At Facility & During Activity	10
Section 7: Insurance	12
Section 8: Resources	13

## SECTION 1

# Purpose

Hockey NL has worked in partnership with Hockey Canada and its member associations to develop an appropriate return to hockey plan for all of its members. Our purpose is to ensure that every phase of our return to hockey is undertaken with an abundance of caution while respecting the safety of our Players, Coaches, Officials, Administrators and Volunteers. Hockey NL's plan focuses on making the return to hockey a fun and positive experience while maintaining safety for all our members.

The Return to Hockey plan is designed to encompass the 2021-22 season. Our plan is adaptable and will be modified in response to changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic within Newfoundland and Labrador. By respecting physical distancing, in addition to encouraging and maintaining good hygiene in our facilities, all members of Hockey NL shall be better prepared to respond effectively.

## SECTION 2

# Disclaimer

The information in this document is not intended or implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Hockey NL, and its member associations, leagues and teams make no representation and assume no responsibility in respect of their information concerning COVID-19. The evolving nature of the current pandemic, and any information related to COVID-19, would best be obtained from the Chief Medical Office for Newfoundland & Labrador.

## SECTION 3

# Vaccination

Covid 19 vaccines are an important part of the layered prevention strategy.

Hockey NL encourages that anyone who is eligible to receive the Covid-19 vaccine to give appropriate consideration to getting fully vaccinated. Vaccines may be required for interprovincial travel. Hockey NL recommends teams review the vaccine requirement and travel advisories in other provinces should they be participating in games or tournaments outside of the province. Hockey NL is not responsible for any quarantine, Covid 19 testing or other costs should someone incur due not being fully vaccinated.

## SECTION 4

# Communications Officer

Positive, open and transparent communication is vital for a safe Return to Hockey. Associations and leagues will want to ensure they understand what restrictions, controls and guidelines are in place. This information must be relayed to administrators, officials, team staff, volunteers, parents/guardians and players **in advance** to ensure the Return to Hockey experience is enjoyable.

It is recommended that associations and leagues assign a person who will be responsible to ensure all updated and relevant information is passed on to everyone within their jurisdiction.

Responsibilities can include:

- ✓ Monitoring all relevant updates from the CMO;
- ✓ Monitoring all relevant updates from Hockey NL;
- ✓ Point person for communicating any questions or concerns to Hockey NL;
- ✓ Communicating with local facilities on guidelines and updates;
- ✓ Ensuring participants are following guidelines set down by Hockey Canada, Hockey NL, their hockey association, league, or facility; and
- ✓ Ensuring any suspected COVID-19 cases are reported as required by the CMO.



It would be beneficial for the Communications Officer to communicate with their association or league executive on a regular basis to assist in facilitating updates.

## SECTION 5

# Facilities

During the Return to Hockey and reopening of arenas, ongoing patience and flexibility will be required. Positive interaction will be greatly increased with a recognition and understanding of CMO direction on a variety of operational practices.

The CMO has released *Overall Guidance for Sport and Recreation* that must be followed. At all times, directions from the CMO will supersede any general recommendation of Hockey Canada or Hockey NL.

Associations and leagues must reinforce with their members the importance for complying with these guidelines. Our Return to Hockey will only succeed if the health and safety of everyone is uppermost in our minds.

## Facility Meeting

Positive and open communication will be an important part of returning safely to the rink. Prior to starting hockey activities, it is recommended that associations and leagues reach out to their facility management for clarification of the following:

- ✓ What are facility's guidelines and requirements specific to physical distancing?
- ✓ Are there restrictions specific to the number of people allowed in the facility?
- ✓ What are entry and/or re-entry rules?
- ✓ Are there areas that may not be accessible in the facility – main lobby, dressing rooms, observation areas, showers, washrooms, etc.?
- ✓ If dressing rooms are not available, are common areas with marked physical-distanced seating available to put on or remove skates and skate guards?
- ✓ What additional cleaning and disinfection processes have been implemented by the facility and how often are common touch points serviced?
- ✓ What accommodations can be made for participants with special needs?
- ✓ What are the general facility rules specific to practicing good hygiene?

Communication should take place throughout the 2021/2022 season to evaluate the effectiveness of the protocols in place and to make adjustments as required. Respect for the facility and all those that work within it is imperative.

# Facility Guidelines

In discussion with the facility management, associations and leagues should follow these guidelines when creating their facility specific operating protocols:

- When parents/guardians are not permitted in the facility, players can meet family in their vehicles (if their age permits) following physical-distancing requirements. Congregating in areas of the facility, such as the lobby, exit and parking lot is not permitted. Players and parents/guardians must follow physical-distancing guidelines when leaving facilities and in the parking lot.
- Where practical, separate entrance and exit doors should be utilized. Clear signage identifying entrances and exits should be utilized. Consider controlling the entrance and exit doors to ensure access to the facility occurs only at the designated times.
- While *Arena Management* may allow the use of dressing rooms, physically distancing still applies. Restriction on the number of people in a dressing room space may mean using multiple dressing rooms will be necessary. Mark individual player spaces based on adequate physical distancing recommendations. The maximum number of people in a dressing room is the maximum number of people per period. If parents are also in the dressing room, the number of players has to be reduced accordingly. Special consideration may also be required for goaltenders.
- For age groups where parents/guardians need to assist players, limit the number of parents/guardians in the facility to one per player. The elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions should refrain from entering the facility.
- When parents are allowed in the facility, it may be best to not use the dressing rooms as physical distancing will severely limit the number of players that can use the dressing rooms.
- Hand sanitizer stations should be available inside the facility at multiple points.
- It is recommended players not shower at the facility. Follow facility guidelines specific to the use of showers. If showers are used, physical distancing must be followed.
- If there are multiple entrances to the ice surface, split the players into groups and have them space appropriately to meet physical-distancing standards at each ice surface entrance.
- Encourage participants to minimize their time in or around the facility. Following each session, participants should not remove their equipment, rather put on their shoes or skate guards and when directed vacate the facility as quickly and safely as possible.

## Facility On-Ice Guidelines

- When buffs are not worn, mark individual player spaces on the players' bench based on adequate physical distancing requirements. Remember, coaches must also physically distance.
- During skills and drills or practise sessions, minimize the amount of time when players are not moving and standing around waiting for instruction.
- Provide markings on the ice and/or along the boards to identify appropriate physical distance in locations where players congregate - in corners, around white boards, etc.
- Increase spacing of faceoff circle markings to ensure physical distancing.
- Increase the size of the goal crease markings to ensure physical distancing.
- Ensure that all contact points/surfaces are cleaned and disinfected between sessions.
- Players must wear a non-medical face mask until they put on their helmet as they are preparing to commence their on-ice sessions.
- Players are not to remove their helmets, face mask/shield and gloves during on-ice sessions.
- Players must not spit, blow their nose freely or release any bodily fluid while on the ice due to high risk of virus transmission.



## SECTION 6

# Hygiene

As we prepare for Return to Hockey, adherence and familiarity with federal and provincial guidelines and requirements specific to the prevention of COVID-19 is vital. Further, it is also important to be familiar with the guidelines specific to your facility.

Hockey NL and its members are knowledgeable and well-established administrators of hockey programs at all levels. Everyone involved in the delivery of hockey programs now need to become knowledgeable risk managers. Conditions surrounding today's hockey programs have changed dramatically and every aspect has to be questioned to determine whether there is minimal risk to the individual participant. This is true in all aspects of our game, including how we ensure physical distancing and proper hygiene is achieved at all times.

## Public Health Authority Guidelines

The conditions related to COVID-19 are different across the country with each public health authority establishing guidelines that best fit the local conditions. Hockey NL takes its direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Newfoundland and Labrador. Knowledge of, and adherence to, the most up to date national and provincial guidelines is essential to build programming that best protects our members. Links to online resources with information related to COVID-19 are provided in Attachment B.

***The following proper hygiene recommendations are universal and when followed will assist in creating an environment that is safer for all participants in hockey activities.***

### **Proper hygiene can help reduce the risk of spreading infection to others:**

- Wash, wash, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom and when preparing food.
- Use 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

#### When coughing or sneezing:

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of the arm, not the hand.
- Dispose of any used tissues as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash hands immediately.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.



## Participant Meeting

It is recommended to host an initial meeting with all parents/guardians/participants to review how programming will look different this season and to allow for questions. This can be done virtually if a meeting space is unavailable to ensure appropriate physical distancing for the CMO recommended maximum number of gathered people.

Topics could include:

- ✓ *Hockey under COVID-19* physical distancing and hygiene protocols;
- ✓ The importance of following all CMO and Hockey NL COVID-19 physical distancing and hygiene protocols, and action that result if these protocols are not followed.
- ✓ Facility guidelines for the number of people that are permitted on the ice at any given time. If permitted in the facility, families are asked to minimize the number of parents/guardians/spectators that attend on-ice sessions to limit the number of people in the facility;
- ✓ System(s) in place to limit the number of patrons entering and exiting the facility at one time. Work with the facility to determine the lowest risk method. Increased number of people inside the facility will require increased sanitization will reduce on-ice time available for players;
- ✓ Execution of on-ice sessions under Hockey NL Return to Hockey guidelines;
- ✓ Any parking lot restrictions for drop-off/pick-ups, rules for entering and leaving the facility and/or dressing room(s), washroom restrictions and other limitations;
- ✓ Player arrival/departure – what to expect on arrival/departure and timelines for players to enter/exit the facility;
- ✓ Importance of players arriving dressed in their equipment and if players can access dressing rooms;
- ✓ Protocols for players with special needs and goaltenders;
- ✓ Review steps for practicing good hygiene; and
- ✓ Steps to be taken if a player(s) is/are not feeling well. Any current regulations around mandatory attendance should be relaxed.

## Prior to Activity

- If a participant does not feel well, has a fever or a cold (runny nose, sore throat, cough, etc.) they should stay home and advise the designated contact. Any participant feeling unwell should refrain from attending and seek medical advice;
- Emphasize to all players the importance of **strict hygiene** before and after sessions. If possible, players should be encouraged to carry individual hand sanitizer.

***The following hand washing recommendations are universal and should be followed at all times including when participating in hockey related activities. Frequent hand washing can prevent COVID-19 spreading.***

**When running water is available, wash hands with plain soap and water and dry thoroughly.**

Follow these steps for perfectly clean hands:

- Remove jewelry, such as rings.
- Wet hands up to the wrists.
- Apply enough soap to cover hands.
- Work soap under fingernails and between joints and fingers for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- Rinse off all lather with water.
- Dry hands with a clean cloth or paper towel - take special care to dry thoroughly.
- Turn off the tap with a paper towel or cloth.

If you do not have access to water, use a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Place enough into the cupped palm of one hand to wet both hands completely. Rub the liquid into the palms, backs of hands, between fingers and under nails.

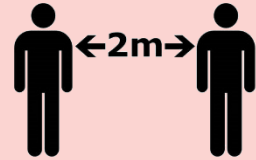
For more information on proper hand hygiene <https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Covid19->

- For on-ice sessions, players should be prepared to come dressed in as much hockey equipment as possible to reduce the time at the facility before and after on-ice sessions.
- When arriving at the facility, players should be instructed to leave their hockey bags in their cars if practical.
- Teams exiting the facility should do so within 10 minutes of session completion. Plan and coordinate new arrival times to avoid members entering and exiting the facility at the same time.
- Notify and reinforce the message that players and coaches need to observe physical-distancing recommendations while on the ice.

*The following physical distancing recommendations are universal and should be followed at all times including when participating in hockey related activities.*

**Physical distancing means making changes in routines to minimize close contact with others.**

- Avoid crowded places and gatherings.
- Avoid common greetings, such as handshakes.
- Limit contact with people at higher risk (older adults and those in poor health).
- Keep a distance of at least two arm-lengths (approximately two metres) as much as possible.



## At Facility & During Activity

### MASKS

- Masks are required for everyone 5 years and older when in the facility. Masks can be removed just prior to entering the ice surface. Buffs will be required by all players on all benches when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Important information on masks can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Guidance-on-Cloth-Masks-Non-Medical-Masks.pdf>
- Coaches and team staff must wear cloth masks where physical distancing is not possible, such as in the dressing room or on the bench.
- 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.

### SIGNS OF SICKNESS

- The association or league rules should be modified to ensure there is no pressure on any player to attend a hockey activity if they are feeling unwell.
- A coach should require that anyone exhibiting signs or symptoms of illness to refrain from attending;
- If participants do not feel well or have identified respiratory symptoms they **MUST** advise team staff immediately and put on a mask. They should immediately go to the designated isolation room or leave the facility and seek medical attention.
- 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 exhibiting signs of infection;

## HYGIENE GUIDELINES

- Facility doors are considered high-risk touch points. Where possible, leave dressing room doors open at all times to reduce touch points and improve air circulation.
- Minimize going in and out of doors, including dressing room(s). Team staff should try and control the number of times players enter and exit dressing rooms, as this avoids contact with the door handles. Where practical, use the elbow to open.
- Sharing of food and beverages is **strictly prohibited**.
- Team warm-ups and practices should adapt to proper physical distancing; reduce the number of one-area stations, including the players congregating for instruction.
- 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 then taken off the bench and sanitized.
- Paper towels/tissue can be used to wipe the face or blow the nose while on the bench. Ensure tissues are properly disposed of. Garbage cans or a plastic bag should be placed close to the bench.
- Spitting and blowing the nose without tissue is absolutely forbidden.
- Players should have individually labelled water bottle. Water bottles should be pre-filled at home to reduce risk of contact exposure. Use only that water bottle when participating in the activity. Water bottles should be sanitized after each session.

### **The Hockey Canada Safety Program recommends the following for the use of water bottles:**

- Good team hygiene includes ensuring all players and staff have their own water bottles to prevent the transmission of viruses and bacteria.
  - Bottles should be labelled and washed after each practice or game.
  - 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 or towels in the penalty box.
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- Pre-game and post-game handshakes are **not permitted**.
  - Players should not share clothing, soap, shampoo or other personal items such as razors and towels.
  - Some equipment should be sanitized (jerseys, pant shells, socks) after each on-ice session following manufacturer guidelines. It is important that players ensure equipment is kept clean.

## SECTION 7

# Insurance

Under Hockey Canada's current General Liability policy, the following is the definition for 'bodily injury':

**"Bodily Injury" means bodily injury, sickness, disease, mental injury, mental anguish or nervous shock sustained by a person, including death resulting from any of these at any time.**

COVID-19 would fall within this definition under disease.

Liability claims against Hockey Canada need to be proven by the third party, therefore continuing to update and enforce risk-management guidelines with the emergence of new risks, such as COVID-19, are imperative. Hockey Canada and its branches are actively working on updating risk-management protocols related to Return to Hockey guidelines post-COVID-19.

As with all claims, the insurance company would investigate claims presented against any member of Hockey Canada that falls within the 'bodily injury' definition and would confirm coverage based on the framing of the allegation(s).

It will also be important to review all contracts for facilities. They may contain a new clause absolving the municipality/private facility owners of any liability related to COVID-19.

New contracts for facilities will need to be carefully scrutinized by members given that associations and leagues may have little control over the cleaning/sanitizing procedures of rented premises. Associations and leagues should not be expected to take on **ALL** liability related to COVID-19 in the facilities they utilize.

Finally, it should be noted that many insurance companies are implementing Communicable Disease/COVID-19 exclusions on all policies either immediately, or upon renewal. Hockey Canada can advise that AIG, who is Hockey Canada's primary General Liability insurer, has agreed to waive this exclusion in the General Liability policy until Sept. 1, 2023. Hockey Canada will NOT have this exclusion in its policy until that date, at the earliest.

## Section 8

# Online Resources

Government of NL COVID-19 Resources

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/resources/>

Government of NL Overall Guidance for Sport and Recreation

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/employers/recreation/overall-guidance/>

Hockey Canada Return to Hockey Resources

<https://www.hockeycanada.ca/en-ca/exclusive/return-to-hockey>

Hockey NL-COVID-19 Resources

<http://hockeynl.ca/covid-19/>

Use of Masks

<https://www.gov.nl.ca/covid-19/files/Guidance-on-Cloth-Masks-Non-Medical-Masks.pdf>