

Updated Guidance: LVHN/CH Recommendation for Return to Sports

8/24/2020

Since the last publication of our Return to Sports recommendations, there has been a flurry of published guidance, sometimes conflicting, from various groups including: [CDC](#), [PA DOH](#) (Department of Health), [PA DOE](#) (Department of Education), [NCAA](#) (National Collegiate Athletic Association), as well as the [NFHS](#) (National Federation of State High School Associations) and [PIAA](#) (Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association). Additionally, multiple states have delayed or postponed their fall sports and multiple colleges have cancelled their fall football season.

LVHN/CH recognizes the challenges that all school districts and organizations are facing related to the current COVID pandemic. We have been and will continue to be there for our community, providing the latest scientific data and guidance to help support schools as they face difficult decisions. Our primary goal is to help schools and organizations minimize risk and stay as safe as possible. We also recognize that organized sports provide children with health, social, and emotional benefits. With this in mind, we have updated our Return to Sports guidance in an attempt to reconcile multiple different recommendations and provide our community partners with coherent, cohesive guidance to assist them through this difficult time.

1. The PA DOE has published [new guidance](#) for determining the level of community transmission of infection (low, medium, high), employing the incidence rate and the percent positivity of diagnostic testing, consistent with the national Coronavirus Task Force recommendations. The PA DOE plans to employ this guidance when determining the instructional model that schools may employ.

Previously, our recommendations had employed the [Pennsylvania Process to Reopen](#) criteria for green/yellow/red phases to move schools through different phases of play. In order to be consistent with the PA DOE, we plan to employ this new guidance for those schools that choose to resume school sports.

The current PA DOH [data](#) shows that our region is above (in some cases well above) the 10 cases/100,000 people threshold, which according to the PA DOE and national guidelines equates to a “Moderate/Medium” risk of community transmission. This gating criteria is important to consider when determining if and what sports should be allowed to participate in competitions.

2. We want to reemphasize that all schools planning to participate in sports should not have any infections on the team in question or an outbreak of cases within the school or organization.



3. Importantly, different sports may present a different level of risk to the competitors and the community. The NCAA, PIAA, and the NFHS have all identified three levels of risk for sports (of note, these risk stratifications have slightly different ranking of several sports – see below). These can be broken down into the following models:
 - Low Contact Risk: Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually without sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors. Examples would include: bowling, diving, fencing, golf, rifle, skiing, swimming, tennis, track and field. Cross country can be put into the low risk category if appropriate accommodations are made.
 - Moderate/Intermediate Contact Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that
 - can't be cleaned between participants. Examples would include: Baseball*, softball*, water polo, gymnastics* (if equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, girls lacrosse.
 - *Could potentially be considered “lower risk” with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants.
 - High Contact Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants. Examples would include: wrestling, football, boys' lacrosse, soccer*, competitive cheer, basketball*, field hockey*, ice hockey*, rowing*, rugby, squash*, volleyball*, water polo*.
 - *Considered “moderate risk” based on the NFHS and PIAA guidance.

When making decisions about sports, we encourage schools and organizations to consider all factors that have been presented above. This includes the current transmission rate within a specific region, any outbreaks within your school or organization, and the risk of transmission per sport based on the guidelines above.

The LVHN/CH Sports Medicine team will continue to provide support and guidance to our regional partners as they navigate the continued challenges posed by the ever-evolving COVID19 pandemic. If you have additional questions, please feel free to reach out to us.