



# USA Team Handball

## Return to Play Guidelines

June 2020

### Overview

USA Team Handball (USATH) is committed to supporting our clubs and athletes returning to training and competition as the world gradually lifts stay-at-home orders. Returning to play in a controlled way, with systems in place to reduce outbreaks, is critical to navigating the next phase of this pandemic. Our Return to Play guidelines for our Member Clubs are dictated by the local and state restrictions outlined by the CDC. For more information, please refer to: [State & Territorial Health Department Websites](#).

Leaders at all levels, from our member clubs to our national team coaches, will need to prepare their communities and continue to contain the disease by systematically evaluating and making adjustments as we return to training and, eventually competitions, as safely as possible. Moving forward, our guiding principles will prioritize the safety of our members and athletes, the safety of our staff and coaches, and the safety of our community, friends and families.

According to the USOPC Chief Medical Officer, although the young and healthy tend to have less severe cases of COVID-19, every case of this disease is potentially life-altering or deadly. Until COVID-19 is eradicated, even if an effective vaccine is developed, there is no way of completely eliminating the risk of a serious or fatal infection. This should always be in the forefront of your mind when deciding whether to return to training.

DO NOT return to play if you:

- are exhibiting any symptoms of the coronavirus: mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough and difficulty breathing, or other symptoms identified by the CDC.
- have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- are a vulnerable individual [according to CDC guidelines](#) and/or those of your state or local government. (Vulnerable individuals include the elderly, individuals with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy. Vulnerable individuals should speak with their physician prior to resuming team handball activity.)

The knowledge surrounding COVID-19 is constantly changing and clubs' circumstances may differ depending on their geographic locations, facilities, memberships and other factors. Accordingly, USA Team Handball encourages clubs and participants to implement the following

measures, to the extent reasonably possible, as minimum precautions. If your team is traveling domestically or internationally, club members should quarantine amongst themselves for two weeks if they do not have access to testing OR one week with two rounds of testing on the two days leading up to the competition. As a reminder, USA Team Handball's sanction, and thus its insurance coverage, will apply only to areas in which clubs can be open legally.

Finally, USA Team Handball's Return to Play Guidelines are recommendations, not mandates. They are based in significant part upon current guidelines promulgated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee and other publicly available resources. The recommendations in this document are not intended and should not be taken to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, nor do USATH or any of its divisions assume any liability or responsibility for the efficacy of the recommendations provided herein.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the Return to Play Guidelines, please contact [info@usateamhandball.org](mailto:info@usateamhandball.org)

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## Return to Play Chart

Phase	Regional health mandate	Training	Team activities	Competition	Insurance
<a href="#">Phase 1</a>	Stay at home	Virtual	Virtual	None	Accident and Liability Insurance claims not accepted
<a href="#">Phase 2</a>	Stay at home orders lifted, social / physical distancing in place	Virtual	Virtual	None	Accident and Liability Insurance claims not accepted
<a href="#">Phase 3</a>	Small gatherings, no physical contact	Social / physical distancing, limited numbers, no physical contact	Virtual preferred, in-person activities following local restrictions	None	Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted
<a href="#">Phase 4</a>	Mid-large gatherings, public facilities open	Limited contact	Virtual preferred, in-person activities following local restrictions	Intersquad permitted with modified play	Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted
<a href="#">Phase 5</a>	Normal social / physical activities, full training and competition	Normal training	Normal team activities	Normal competition	Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted

## Definitions

- Training - non-competitive active gatherings (weight training, strength and conditioning, cardio, running, fitness, practice, individual drills, etc.)
- Team activities - Non-competitive and inactive team gatherings, including but not limited to; athlete, coach and administrator, non-competition team outings and trips
- Competition - matches or events, scrimmages, intersquad competition, tournaments, friendly matches, etc.
- Communal equipment - balls, cones, goals, uniforms, pinnies, bags, scorekeepers, clocks, stopwatches, water bottles, towels, etc.
- No contact rules - handshakes, high fives, hugs, sharing water bottles, physical contact during training or competition, etc.
- PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) - facemask/face coverings, gloves, standard precautions for medical staff
- Social distancing - also called “physical distancing,” means keeping space between yourself and other people outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing: Stay at least six feet (about two arms' length) from other people.

## **Phase 1**

Stay at home orders.

### Training

All training should be individual and happen at home, using personal equipment. Only participants who are symptom-free should be training.

### Team Activities

All team communications done virtually.

### Competition

No inter-squad handball competition.

### Insurance

Accident and Liability Insurance claims not accepted.

## **Phase 2**

Stay at home lifted, social distancing in place.

### Training

All training should be individual and happen at home or state approved outdoor locations, using personal equipment. Only participants who are symptom-free should be training.

### Team Activities

All team communications done virtually.

### Competition

No inter-squad handball competition.

### Insurance

Accident and Liability Insurance claims not accepted.

## Phase 3

Small gatherings, no contact.

### Training

- Symptom Checks
  - No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms within the previous 14 days.
  - Encouraged temperature check all participants on arrival or at home beforehand, must register lower than 99.6 F
    - For more information: [A Guide to Temperature Checks](#)
- Social Distancing
  - Small groups allowed, following social distancing and size restrictions as dictated by local authorities (number of participants lower than local restrictions)
  - Strongly encouraged to have the same group of athletes practicing together week after week (options include only having players practice with teammates of the same position or only having the first team practice together)
  - Physical distancing of a minimum 6ft, 12ft or more preferred
  - PPEs encouraged before and after practice (recommend during)
- Practice Logistics
  - Cardio and non-contact drills only.
    - No drills involving the communal sharing of equipment (including balls), including but not limited to passing activities and shooting activities with a goalkeeper.
  - Practice must be held outside
- Equipment
  - Only personal equipment (no passing drills - everyone must use their own ball)
  - Disinfect floor surfaces, tops of netting, poles, etc. prior to any competitions, during timeouts if appropriate, and at the end of each practice

### Team Activities

- Team meetings and gatherings that meet the local government approved amount of individuals
- Team meetings and communication preferred to be conducted virtually
- Coaches: permitted on site, continue to adhere to social distancing protocols, encouraged to wear PPEs

### Competition

No inter-squad handball competition.

### Insurance

Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted. Insurance claims are only accepted from ,

teams, and members that have active memberships with USA Team Handball. If you or your club does not have an active membership and would like one, go to [Sport:80](#) to register.

## General Guidelines

We have provided these guidelines as a recommendation, but we encourage even more strict sanitization and social distancing protocols. Following these guidelines does not guarantee the prevention of virus infection.

- Education and Screening
  - Self educate on symptoms of COVID-19 and risks
  - Conduct daily checks on symptoms
- Practice essential hygiene:
  - Bring your own equipment
  - Change and shower at home
  - Refrain from using public restrooms whenever possible
  - Bring hand sanitizer and sanitize during all practice breaks
  - Do not share water bottles, food, supplements, etc.
- Follow Physical distancing practices outside of play/practice:
  - Suspend carpooling
  - Avoid non-essential team meetings, celebrations
  - Avoid embraces, high fives, handshakes and any other non-essential contact
  - Consider limiting spectator attendance to essential staff and limited family members

## Phase 4

Mid-large gatherings, open public facilities.

### Training

- Education and Symptom Checks
  - No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms within the previous 14 days
  - Encouraged temperature check all participants on arrival or at home beforehand, must register lower than 99.6 F
    - For more information: [A Guide to Temperature Checks](#)
- Equipment
  - No resin (wax, stickum, etc.)
  - Preferred use of personal ball, communal balls should be sanitized and changed out at least every 15 minutes
  - Clean equipment after every use
- Participation
  - Restrict the number of athletes based on local healthcare guidelines
  - Same group of athletes train together
- Practice Logistics
  - Restrict use of locker rooms or changing rooms
  - Outdoor training
  - PPEs encouraged before and after practice (recommended during)
- Limited contact drills
  - Such as: passing drills, individual footwork and technique drills, etc.
  - Focus on technique drills over contact
  - Avoid defense drills (heavy on positioning), scrimmaging (until comfortable)

### Team Activities

- Team meetings and gatherings under local government approved amount
- Team meetings and communication preferred virtually
- Coaches: Permitted on site, continue to adhere to social distancing protocols and encouraged to wear PPEs

### Competition

- Travel
  - If your team is traveling domestically or internationally, club members should quarantine amongst themselves for two weeks if they do not have access to testing OR one week with two rounds of testing on the two days leading up to the competition.
- Modified scrimmages: fewer players
  - 3v3 (training format for indoor handball)

- 4v4 (training format for beach and street handball)
  - Segmented courts as needed
- Limited/no contact
  - Beach handball rules implemented
  - Use of gloves recommended
- Outdoor handball preferred whenever possible
  - Beach
  - Grass
  - Any other type of outdoor handball
- Intersquad scrimmage permitted with limited contact
  - Intersquad is preferred through Phase 4
- Equipment
  - Switching and sanitizing scrimmage/practice/intersquad balls in regular intervals (recommended: at least every 15 minutes)
  - Disinfect floor surfaces, tops of netting, poles etc. prior to the game, during time outs if appropriate, and at the end of each game.
  - No resin, wax, stickum, etc.
- Practice essential hygiene:
  - No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms within the previous 14 days
  - Temperature check all participants on arrival, must register lower than 99.6 F
  - PPEs recommended when competing and required by coaches, officials, spectators and athletes when not competed
  - Handwashing breaks during time-outs
  - Recommend bringing individual towels for sweat (to avoid athletes touching their faces with hands or arms)
  - Restrict use of locker rooms or changing rooms

## Insurance

Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted. Insurance claims are only accepted from , teams, and members that have active memberships with USA Team Handball. If you or your club does not have an active membership and would like one, go to [Sport:80](#) to register.

## General Guidelines

These are basic guidelines, though we encourage even more stringent sanitization and social distancing practices whenever possible. Following these guidelines does not guarantee the prevention of virus infection.

- Education and Screening
  - Self educate on symptoms of COVID-19 and risks
  - Conduct daily checks on symptoms
- Physical distancing
  - Consider limiting spectator attendance to essential staff and limited family

- Follow social distancing outside of play - avoid non-essential contact
  - Suspend carpooling
- Practice essential hygiene
  - Change and shower at home, refrain from using public restrooms if possible
  - Bring hand sanitizer and sanitize during all practice breaks
  - Do not share water bottles, food, supplements, etc.

## Phase 5

Normal social activities, full training and competition.

### Training

- Traditional training and contact protocol
- Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment

### Team Activities

- Traditional team gathering protocol
- Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment

### Competition

- If your team is traveling domestically or internationally, club members should quarantine amongst themselves for two weeks if they do not have access to testing OR one week with two rounds of testing on the two days leading up to the competition.
- Inter-state & cross-state competition permitted with guidance from local legislature and health departments
- Fan and crowd attendance permitted in accordance with local legislation and health departments
- Continue rigorous cleaning of communal equipment

### Insurance

Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted. Insurance claims are only accepted from , teams, and members that have active memberships with USA Team Handball. If you or your club does not have an active membership and would like one, go to [Sport:80](#) to register.

### General Guidelines

While Phase 5 will be mostly back to usual play and practice, we still encourage following the guidelines outlined for Phases 3 and 4. Following these guidelines does not guarantee the prevention of virus infection.

- Continue to follow stringent sanitization practices
- Continue to self-monitor for symptoms and self-isolate if infected

## Understanding Risk

### Risk in Handball

Handball is a contact sport. To train and compete fully, handball requires regular physical contact. High risk physical contact, where players are in close proximity, likely poses higher risk if one player is infected with the virus.

In training, this type of contact should be minimized or avoided. Players who have participated in high-risk activities should not interact with athletes who have not. If a player begins to exhibit symptoms of infection, all those who interacted with this player should self-isolate and get tested.

### Personal Risk

- Exercise can be beneficial for one's immune system, but prolonged, high intensity exercise may dampen the immune system if the individual is not used to this level of activity. Some athletes may have an increased susceptibility to COVID-19 infection.
  - Players should ramp up their training slowly so as to not overwhelm their immune system.
  - Players should reflect on their level of fitness and activity during lockdown before returning to their full level of training.
- People suffering from underlying illnesses, including cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, diabetes, some types of cancer appear to be more severely affected by the virus. Other more heavily affected groups include individuals over 60 and the severely obese (BMI 40+).
- Athletes with no underlying conditions are not a part of the vulnerable group.
- Players who have suffered from COVID-19 should self isolate for 14 days and not engage in exercise for 14 days or until their symptoms settle. Players should consult with their primary care physician before returning to activity.
- If you have concerns about returning to training after a COVID-19 infection, please contact your primary care physician.

## Suggested Administrator Checklist

This is a suggested checklist for administrators to be used during Phases 3 and 4 (and 5 as needed). Completion of this checklist does not guarantee prevention of virus infection.

### Venue Preparation

- Alert facility management of training events and activities.
- Thoroughly sanitize all shared equipment and other shared materials
- Set up a temperature-check station
- Provide social distancing rules, through digital communication, signage, or verbal communication
- Prevent sharing of water coolers
- Extend bench areas to allow for social distancing
- Ensure the scorekeeping/timekeeping area follows social distancing of 6ft between each of the scorekeepers/timekeepers/delegates

### Players

- Ensure players have not shown any symptoms in the last 14 days
- Do not carpool to the venue
- Follow extensive cleaning/hygiene practices
- Change and shower at home
- Bring individual equipment, including but not limited to: clothing/jerseys, water bottles, PPE
- Follow no contact/social distancing rules

### Coaches

- Ensure coaches have not shown any symptoms in the last 14 days
- Follow extensive cleaning/hygiene practices
- Adhere to Physical distancing rules (maintaining at least six feet of distance)
- Wear PPE throughout training
- Prepare training plans with non-contact drills
- Keep detailed lists of attendees to any training sessions
- Submit scrimmage/intersquad roster digitally

### Officials

- PREFERRED: no officials required during trainings
- Ensure officials have not shown symptoms in the last 14 days
- Follow extensive cleaning/hygiene practices
- Change and shower at home
- Adhere to social distancing rules (maintaining at least six feet of distance)
- Bring PPE and wear throughout training

- Confirm scrimmage/intersquad roster digitally
- Transmit scoresheet digitally to teams following scrimmage/intersquad game

## Spectators

- PREFERRED: no spectators until Phase 5
- Ensure spectators have not shown symptoms in the last 14 days
- Follow extensive cleaning/hygiene practices
- Communicate and follow social distancing rules
- Bring PPE to wear through practice

## Warm-Ups

- Athletes should continue to wear PPE when not engaged in training
- Warm-ups should occur with at least six feet and preferably great than 12 feet of physical distancing
- No shared materials or equipment

## Leaving the Venue

- Sanitize all equipment or shared contact surfaces
- Follow the cleaning protocols outlined by the facility
- Ensure attendees do not congregate for post handball activities
- No exchange of personal items

## Confirmed Cases

- If a person tests positive for COVID-19 prior to return to play activities, the individual must obtain doctor approval to participate in small gathering activities
- If a person tests positive after return to play activities:
  - The individual must self isolate and inform the club of the situation
  - The club must suspend all handball activities
  - The club must inform all participants of the confirmed case and tell them to follow CDC guidelines for symptom recognition.

## **COVID-19 FAQ**

Where can I find more information on my local state guidelines?

The CDC has listed the websites for health departments in all 50 states, 8 US territories and freely associated states, and the District of Columbia [HERE](#).

What should I do if I believe one of my athletes, coaches, or teammates is displaying symptoms of COVID-19?

If someone you are playing handball with, or yourself, exhibits any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, they should be sent home and requested to contact their healthcare provider.

An athlete who has exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 or been in close contact with someone else who exhibited such symptoms should not return to practice until 14 days have elapsed without symptoms, or until a formal letter of clearance from a healthcare provider is provided to club administration.

If an athlete tests positive for COVID-19 or has been in contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, the club should notify other fencers and parents present at the practice about a possible exposure.

The coach should NOT share the sick athlete's name with other athletes and parents to protect the privacy of the athlete and that of their family. Exposed individuals should consult their own healthcare providers.

Stay home if you have had close sustained contact in the last 14 days with anyone who was sick or known or believed to have COVID-19. Stay home if you are sick or do not feel well.

What can I do to limit my chances of contracting COVID-19?

The CDC recommends preventative actions regarding respiratory illnesses, including:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol. Wash hands with soap and water regularly.

I'm an athlete. Where can I find more athlete-specific resources during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- [Team USA ACE Resource Hub](#)
- [CARES Act Team USA Athlete FAQ](#)
- [USOPC Sports Medicine Creative Workout Options](#)
- [Six Tips for the Traveling Athlete](#)
- [For Athletes: Coping with the Impact of Coronavirus](#)
- [Coping with Competition Cancellations or Postponements in the Age of Coronavirus](#)
- [Virtual Resources to Help Stay Connected in a Time of Social Distancing](#)
- [Managing Sleep Challenges During COVID-19](#)
- [How to Maintain a Training Ready Mind and Brain During COVID-19 Uncertainty](#)
- [14 Days of Focus](#)
- [Keeping Your Kids Safe Online During COVID-19](#)
- [Infection Prevention Recommendations](#)
- [Self-Monitoring Instructions](#)
- [Testing Does Not Change the Treatment](#)
- [TSA prepared for summer travelers with updated security procedures](#)

I'm a member of a handball club. Where can I find more club-specific resources during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- [USOPC Return to Training Considerations](#)
- [Digital Safety](#)
- [Safety Checklist for Exercise Facility and Equipment Maintenance from the NSCA](#)
- [Return to Training: Guidance on Safe Return to Training For Athletes from the NSCA](#)

Where can I find more resources on COVID-19 to share with my athletes/team/coaches?

- [World Health Organization](#) - COVID-19 Updates and links for: Protect yourself, Q&A, Travel advice, Situation reports, Media Resources, Technical Guidance, Global Research. Many video links on how to wash hands properly, when to wear a mask, what to do if you are sick.
- [CDC - COVID-19 Main page](#) - Travel, Communities, Businesses, Health Departments, Laboratories.
- [CDC - What do you do if you are sick?](#)
- [TEAM USA - COVID-19 Updates](#)
- [U.S. Department of State](#) - Information on international travel guidelines, including travel to the Olympic and Paralympic Games

- [Department of Health and Human Services](#) - Notice of Arrival Restrictions Due to Coronavirus
- [IOC Executive Board Statement on the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and the Olympic Games Tokyo 2020 \(March 3, 2020\)](#)