



Racquetball Canada

Return to Training Recommendations for Players

While many regions in Canada still have strict restrictions with regard to COVID-19 there are several regions in our country wherein restrictions have been relaxed. Racquetball Canada is committed to ensuring the safety of all participants.

Our priority is to protect the health, safety of athletes, coaches and practitioners. Returning to training must be done with this principle in mind. We must also respect the public health authority guidelines in each jurisdiction. In most cases, this will mean adapted training environments and schedules.

It must be understood that government and public health authorities may impose certain restrictions on athletic or fitness facilities, and that the club or facility management may implement certain measures and precautions to reduce the risk of infection and transmission while in the facility and while practicing or playing racquetball.

Racquetball Canada recommends that you follow the guidelines of health officials. Below are racquetball specific recommendations when it is safe to return to the sport.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

Playing and practicing racquetball infringes on COVID-19 physical distancing recommendations and therefore may increase the risk of infection and transmission among participants.

Inherent risk factors include:

1. In racquetball, players are often in close physical contact for prolonged period of time; much less than two metres apart.
2. Epidemiologic evidence suggests this virus transmits readily by respiratory droplets and contact. Racquetball may lead to increased respiratory activity.
3. Racquetball is played indoors.
4. Racquetball is played in an enclosed, confined space.
5. Racquetball is an active for life sport and may have participants that are deemed at risk of acquiring COVID-19

Even with the recommendations in place, racquetball remains an activity with a high risk of transmission **IF** an on-court opponent, partner or coach is COVID-19 positive/contagious.

Racquetball Canada believes that racquetball is a sport that can reunite Canadians when it is safe to do so.

BEFORE YOU PLAY

1. Ensure that your city or region allows racquetball play based on the government authorities' criteria for the progressive lifting of confinement measures, and that your municipality permits the use of racquetball courts.
2. Consider who you might be playing or training with. Training solo or playing with healthy family members or persons quarantining in your household for at least 14 days offer the least risk.
3. Do not play if you or your playing partner:
 - i. Exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms, i.e., fever, cough, difficulty breathing, or pneumonia in both lungs.*
 - ii. Have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
 - iii. Are considered vulnerable or at risk (i.e., if you are elderly, or suffering from health problems, notably high blood pressure, pulmonary diseases, diabetes, obesity and asthma).
4. It is highly recommended that competitive players ease their way back into play prior to competition. Given the layoff from competing, players may be more susceptible to injuries stemming from under-training, acute over-use and other related injuries. Racquetball Canada strongly recommends several weeks of on-court and off-court conditioning before competitive play begins.
5. Be prepared to provide written consent to the club for a child under the age of 18, authorizing them to participate in their racquetball session.
6. Only one parent or guardian should accompany a junior player to any racquetball facility.
7. When possible, use online reservations and payments. Otherwise, e-payments (including tap) are strongly recommended.
8. Bring your own towel, as the facility may no longer provide towels..
9. Allow time for staff to sanitize courts after previous use before entering the court.

PREPARING TO PLAY

10. Respect the limitation of the type of racquetball activities that may be permitted with regard to the facility's re-opening phase, as may be mandated by public health authorities and club management.

* <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>

11. Exercise caution with racquetball balls. While there is no direct evidence that the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus strain that causes COVID-19) can survive on a racquetball ball, SARS-CoV-2 virus within respiratory droplets from an infected person may survive on some surfaces for up to three days.
12. Bring your own racquetball balls. Remove with a racquet any racquetball balls that may have been left on court.
13. Handling of the same ball by different players during a game should be prevented.
 - i. Each player (or duo in the case of doubles) should bring a game ball onto the court, and each should warm up their own ball. Each player will only serve with, and touch with their hand or body, their respective ball. Upon losing a point, the player will retrieve their ball and place it into their pocket while their opponent prepares to serve with his or her ball.
14. Consider spraying racquetball balls with a disinfectant spray after each racquetball session. The use of new balls on a regular basis is strongly recommended. Consider adding additional time outs to change balls if needed.
15. At courtside, keep your gear contained in a bin that may be provided by the club or facility.
16. Protect yourself against infections:
 - i. Arrive as close as possible to when you need to be at your racquetball facility. To protect others, consider wearing a mask when in the facility, before and after play.
 - ii. Wash your hands with disinfectant soap and water for at least 20 seconds before going to a racquetball court.
 - iii. Bring hand sanitizer for convenient use.
 - iv. Use new balls and a new grip, if possible.
 - v. Clean your equipment regularly, including racquets and water bottles.
 - vi. Do not share equipment with your playing partner.
 - vii. Make sure you bring a full water bottle or two to your racquetball facility to avoid touching a tap or water fountain.
 - viii. If you cough or sneeze, do so into a tissue or your shirt to cover your mouth and nose. Wash and sanitize your hands before resuming play.

- ix. Avoid touching door handles, benches and all other objects where the virus could survive. If you touch something, make sure to wash your hands and disinfect the surface you have touched. Consider designating one person to open and close the court door.
- x. Avoid using communal club equipment, such as racquets and eyewear. Use personal equipment only.
- xi. Consider taking extra precautions by wearing two racquetball gloves and consider adding a waterproof glove under the racquetball glove.
- xii. Certified racquetball eyewear should be worn on court at all times.
- xiii. Unless required to by the public health authority, clubs may have specific policies around the mandatory or optional use of face masks covering the mouth and nose during on-court play or practice. There is some question as to the efficacy and practicality on their use for a high intensity activity like racquetball. Consider that:
 - a. The latest information suggests that masks are largely to protect symptomatic or asymptomatic people from spreading droplets and less for protecting them from being infected.
 - b. Regarding practicality, there is no available research on the physiological impact of wearing a mask in racquetball. Nor do individuals at the outset have experience of having tried such previously. There are some CAUTIONS:
 - Playing racquetball with a mask should be done with caution due to the increase in breathing resistance encountered while wearing a mask. Due to the high intensity nature of racquetball it is possible for the body to not get adequate oxygen to supply working muscles and important body functions. Most importantly, limiting oxygen supply to the brain can result in light-headedness, fainting, dizziness and shortness of breath. The general approach should be to start playing slowly and keep the exertion level low to moderate until you learn how your body is reacting to the change in airflow and breathing patterns.
 - These symptoms can occur in anyone but people with cardiovascular or respiratory conditions should be extra cautious.
 - If you are attempting to play racquetball with a mask try to minimize the risk of an adverse reaction by starting physical exertion slowly and monitor yourself for early feelings of being out of breath. You should expect less airflow into the lungs which equates with less oxygen getting to working muscles and therefore the body cannot produce as much energy. Fatigue will come on quicker and recovery will be slower.

- If any symptoms such as light-headedness, fainting, dizziness and shortness of breath occur, you should immediately stop playing and sit down with your back to the wall in case fainting should occur. You should remove the mask if symptoms don't immediately resolve or get worse. You should stay sitting until the symptoms resolve and end the session, and be very careful when standing up after such an episode as fainting can still occur even if you have begun to feel better.

Racquetball Canada has suggested to clubs that discretion may be required in mandating use of face masks. They could, for example, be mandated for lower intensity sessions, for training sessions, for those 50 years of age or older, or with younger children, and be designated as a personal decision for solo sessions and for competitive play. Look for your or the host club policies around the use of face masks in advance so as to prevent real time disagreement between players about to enter the court.

WHILE PLAYING

17. Avoid contact with other players. Apply a more liberal 'hinder' rule in order to do so.
18. Forego traditional shaking of hands with other players, fist bumps, 'patting of the back' or other unnecessary physical contact. Alternatively, consider a racquet tap or nod.
19. Avoid touching your face after manipulating a ball, racquet or when you hit the ball to another player.
20. Use your racquet/foot to direct a ball to your opponent. Avoid using your hands to pick up the racquetball ball. Observe the "Own balls" recommendations stated above.
21. It is strictly **PROHIBITED** to wipe sweat from hands or forearms on any court wall. Players may bring small, personal hand towels on their person or onto the court, placed in the back opposite corners of the court.
22. In doubles, NO whispering to each other from a close distance to strategize.
23. To minimize court exits and entrances, consider bringing water tight water bottles and small towels onto the court, placed in the back corners of the court and taking time outs on the court. If the ball hits these items replay the point

AFTER PLAYING

24. Wash your hands carefully with water and disinfectant soap or use hand sanitizer.
25. If match scores must be entered by players into a computer or onto a draw sheet, consider:
 - i. Using a personal devices before using club provided computers; or
 - ii. Emailing the game info to the appropriate club representatives who can input results; or
 - iii. Heed hygiene instructions, such as to sanitize the keyboard or pencil with disinfectant wipes after use.
26. Do not use locker rooms or changing areas. Shower at home.

27. Leave the court immediately after play is finished.
28. No extra-curricular or social activity should take place. No congregation after playing.
29. All players should leave the facility immediately after play.
30. On arrival at home immediately put your athletic clothes into the wash and take a shower.