



Racquetball Canada

Return to Play Recommendations for Club Administrators, Coaches and Anyone Organizing Racquetball Activities

As different levels of government begin to outline its plan for removing COVID-19-related restrictions, Racquetball Canada offers recommendations for club administrators, coaches, and anyone organizing Racquetball-related activities.

Ultimately, local public health officials will need to support re-opening as Canada's provinces and cities are affected differently with COVID-19. Consequently, they may have unique timelines and policies regarding opening of businesses and gatherings of individuals, both which will impact when and how athletic facilities may resume function in different regions. Such governing authority policies, and any risk mitigation measures they include must be followed in priority and, to the extent of any overlap or uncertainty, supersede these recommendations.

Racquetball Canada is committed to safe sport and is pleased to offer the following recommendations:

RACQUETBALL AS AN ACTIVITY – COVID-19 RISK FACTORS

It must be recognized that playing and practicing racquetball infringes on COVID-19 physical distancing recommendations and therefore may increase the risk of infection transmission to participants. Inherent risk factors include:

1. In racquetball, players are often in close physical contact for prolonged periods of time; much less than two metres apart.
2. Epidemiologic evidence suggests this virus transmits readily by respiratory droplets and contact. Racquetball involves prolonged exertion, which may lead to increased respiratory activity.
3. Racquetball is played indoors.
4. Racquetball is played in an enclosed, confined space.
5. Racquetball is an activity for life. As such, those over 50 years old are deemed at risk by public health authorities.

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.

If practiced responsibly, racquetball can be a great opportunity for participants to relieve stress, socialize with others, provide much-needed exercise and serve an important role in Canada's recovery.

The material below outlines the many measures and precautions to take before organizing a racquetball activity, particularly at the outset of re-opening, as a way to reduce the risks.

ADVANCE FACILITY, OPERATIONS AND STAFF PREPARATIONS TOWARDS A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

1. Check with your liability insurance provider to learn if it has any requirements that must be met as a condition of its provision of insurance coverage upon re-opening.
2. The question of liability waivers may arise. Even though liability waivers are routine and well-known, it is unclear whether a COVID-19 waiver relieving a service provider of liability for exposure claims would be enforceable. This is due, in part, to the practical reality that no Canadian court has adjudicated on waivers in this context. Racquetball Canada makes no representation that a club or facility should or should not implement a return-to-play liability waiver. This is at the sole discretion of the club or facility. Racquetball Canada has examples of waivers for facilities and events if necessary.
3. Consider clear protective shields (to protect administrative staff) at circulation, check-in desks and pro shops, etc., similar to those now seen at banks, grocery stores and pharmacies.
4. When possible, encourage online reservations and payments; otherwise, electronic payments (including card tap) are strongly recommended.
5. Use signs and ground markings to indicate proper distancing from employees, for example at reception desks.
6. Ensure that an adequate supply of hard-surface disinfectants are on hand, and which meet Health Canada's requirements for emerging viral pathogens. These authorized disinfectants are to be used against SARS-CoV-2, the specific coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Visit: [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of hard-surface disinfectants](#).
7. Hand sanitizer should be made available to all clients at each entrance/exit to the facility, at each court, and in suitable locations throughout the facility.
8. Hand tissues and garbage bins lined with disposable bags should be made available at each court.
9. Ensure appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is on hand and available to staff, particularly to custodial/maintenance staff. PPE consists of gowns, gloves, masks, facial protection (i.e., masks and eye protection, face shields or

masks with visor attachments), or specific respirators recommended to provide a barrier to exposure to SARS-CoV-2. Visit Health Canada's [Personal protective equipment against COVID-19 for more information](#). Consult your local public health authority for any athletic facility-specific recommendations.

10. Provide your employees with masks, gloves and all other protective items, and ensure that each member of your staff washes their hands regularly.
11. Arrange for special training of staff on the proper use of PPE. Administrators may wish to consult its public health authority or refer to the [Using Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\)](#) guidelines developed by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.
12. Daily attestations are necessary to ensure no one who knowingly has COVID-19 participants. Ensure you are aware of any temperature testing requirements issued by the respective government or public health authority for persons entering your facility.
13. To protect others, consider requiring all persons to wear a mask when in the facility, before and after play. Note possible exception while on-court playing under "Equipment"
14. Doors accessible to the public should remain open, if possible, to reduce contact with door handles.
15. Frequently clean all surfaces, including counters, door handles, benches, toilets, etc.
16. Close all hand-operated water fountains and ask that all players bring their own refreshments.
17. Consider installing or converting any existing water fountains to be touchless or foot-activated.
18. Stagger booking times between different court rentals to create a buffer in the flow of individuals moving in and out of the court areas.
19. Increase court intervals to allow players to finish and leave the area before the next set of players arrive, and to allow for court cleaning after each court use.
20. If match scores must be entered into a computer or onto a draw sheet, consider:
 - i. encouraging use of personal electronic devices before using club provided computers; or
 - ii. encouraging players to email the game info to an appropriate club representatives who can input results; or
 - iii. posting very visible hygiene instructions, such as sanitizing the keyboard or pencil with disinfectant wipes after use.

21. Limit your activities in the facility commensurate with the current Phase or Risk Level (see Table under 'Racquetball Activities' below).
22. Towels should not be made available. Players should supply their own if necessary.
23. Limit locker room access as much as possible.
24. Players should not shower at the facility. They should come prepared to play and then leave the premises thereafter. On arrival at home they should immediately put their athletic clothes into the wash and take a shower.
25. Discourage occasions for gatherings by making communal or public areas in your facility inaccessible. Consider removing furniture from lounge areas.
26. Post clear signage showing closed areas
27. Limit the facility to the minimum number of employees required to operate.
28. Communicate all hygiene measures in advance to all of your clients.
29. Prohibit any wiping of sweat from hands or forearms on any court wall. Players who sweat considerably should be permitted to wear sweat bands and/or wrist bands, and be permitted to bring small personal hand towels onto the court.
30. To prevent players from spreading their gear across chairs, benches and the floor, consider providing self-contained containers courtside in which a player may store all of their gear while on court, i.e. bins similar to those used for airport security screening. All bins must be properly sanitized after each use.
31. Regularly remind and encourage clients to wash their hands and adopt proper hygiene practices.
32. Display COVID-19 operational procedures within the facility.
33. Keep a record of all clients who enter, so that you may contact them if needed, for example, if an infected person should use your facility.
34. Ask players under the age of 18 for a written consent from a parent/guardian authorizing them to participate in their racquetball session.
35. Consider limiting one customer at a time to the pro shop.

36. In the racquetball pro shop, if a customer wishes to handle one or more racquets for feel, a supply of PPE gloves should be made available, and the individual should be required to wear one
37. Either do not allow racquets for demo use, or if permitted and a person wishes to demo a racquet on court, the pro shop should (a) consider adding a demo cost to replace the grip after use, or (b) immediately and thoroughly clean the racquet with appropriate disinfectant after use.

EDUCATION/SELF SCREENING

1. Circulate your facility's COVID-19 measures to your members and staff. Consider posting court and play-related restrictions on the door of each racquetball court.
2. Consider posting your club's COVID-19 safety measures on your online membership page, requiring a checkbox whereby the member agrees that they understand and agree to abide by these safety measures as a condition of entry into the facility.
3. Advise that anyone who feels unwell or shows any COVID-19 symptoms must stay at home.*
4. Advise all vulnerable individuals to continue to shelter-in-place. Vulnerable individuals are defined as elderly individuals or anyone with serious underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system are compromised such as by chemotherapy.
5. Advise individuals to stay at home even if they show no COVID-19 symptoms IF they are in directed self-isolation on account of living, caring for, or working with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, or shows symptoms of COVID-19.
6. Place a sign at entryways listing these symptoms to encourage self-screening.

ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL DISTANCING

1. To conform with physical distancing requirements clubs should consider restricting entry. Only players should be allowed on to the courts. No guests or other family members should be admitted.
2. In the case of junior racquetball players, recommend that only one parent/guardian accompany the player.

* These include: cough, fever, difficulty breathing, and pneumonia in both lungs.
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>

3. A maximum number of players equivalent to the number of courts should be allowed in the facility at any time. Coaches or pros are in addition to this. Recommendation is for solo hitting or hitting with players that have been isolating together.
4. Encourage clients to respect physical distancing of two metres, as recommended by government authorities.
5. Establish measures to limit contact between clients and employees.
6. Consider offering livestreaming so that families can watch their child's lesson, clinic or game from their car or home.

COACHING

1. In the early phases of re-opening, group lessons should not be permitted to ensure proper physical distancing, with the exception of family members or persons residing in the same household.
2. As much as possible, coaches must try to remain on the same court and adjust their schedules in order to coach on only one court on a given day.
3. For on-court drills, position players in designated and well spaced-out stations.
4. Drills that require continuous play are recommended, as opposed to ones that require repeated ball-handling.
5. Consider the use of tape as targets in lieu of equipment such as cones.
6. Do not let players handle practice equipment. Coaches should pick up balls and other equipment used on court.
7. Encourage players to use their racquet or foot to push balls back to the drill instructor.

RACQUETBALL EQUIPMENT

1. Certified racquetball eyewear should be worn on the court at all times.
2. Unless required to by the public health authority, clubs may wish to establish 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:

- i. 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.
- ii. 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 the player learns how their 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.
 - Anyone attempting to play racquetball with a mask should try to minimize the risk of an adverse reaction by starting physical exertion slowly and monitor themselves for early feelings of being out of breath. They 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, the player should immediately stop playing and sit down with their back to the wall in case fainting should occur. They should be instructed to remove the mask if symptoms don't immediately resolve or get worse. They 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 the player has begun to feel better.

Racquetball Canada suggests that discretion may be required in mandating 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. Club policies around the use of face masks should be clearly communicated in advance so as to prevent real time disagreement between players about to enter the court.

3. Players should consider wearing two racquetball gloves and an underglove.

4. Stop or minimize the use of communal club equipment, such as racquets, eyewear, and balls. If unavoidable, thoroughly sanitize communal equipment after each use.
5. Exercise caution with racquetball balls. While there is still no evidence as to whether the virus can live on a racquetball ball, we do know that contamination through respiratory droplets from one infected person to another can potentially survive on some surfaces for up to three days.
6. Instruct players to provide their own balls. Remove any racquetball balls that may have been left behind.
7. Handling of the same ball by different players during a game should be prevented.
 - i. Each player 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.
8. Consider spraying racquetball balls with a disinfectant spray after a session. The use of new balls on a regular basis is strongly recommended.

PHASING IN Racquetball ACTIVITIES COMMENSURATE WITH RISK LEVELS

1. Governments and public health authorities are recommending gradual relaxation of restrictions and re-integration of activities in phases over time, consistent with the understood risks as at a particular time.
2. So, too, should club administrators and coaches consider introducing appropriate racquetball activities over time.
3. Racquetball administrators, coaches and facilities across the country differ and operate in varied local contexts. Making an assessment of whether a safe environment can be provided depends on a large range of factors, which apply differently at each venue. It is the responsibility of each racquetball provider, coach, and facility to make that assessment based on their local environment.
4. A club should consider limiting racquetball activities commensurate with their assessment of the risk level, or phasing-in activities over time while monitoring adherence and participant health.
5. While phasing back in league and competitive play, consider ways in which the number of players in the facility, and courtside, can be limited to maintain physical distancing. For example with league, space court bookings and only play singles. This limits off court

players from hanging around. Also encourage all matches to be officiated by the players and do not have additional officials.

6. Consider phasing in tournament play with smaller numbers of people flowing in and out of the facility. Schedule adequate time intervals in play when one category of play ends and the next one begins, so there is no crossover of players.
7. The list of above safety measures may be more stringent at the outset of re-opening and may be gradually relaxed in phases as appropriate.
8. Table 1 below provides an **example** of racquetball activity risk assessment and how different racquetball activities coupled with appropriate safety measures may be introduced over time in phases. A club or organizer may wish to develop or issue only one Phase at a time, determining the appropriate risk mitigation steps commensurate with public health authority direction and information available at that time.

Table 1: Matrix of Sample Phase in of Racquetball Activities with Corresponding Risk Mitigations

Risk Mitigation	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5	PHASE 6
	Lower Risk Level		7	□ 7	□ 7	Higher Risk Level
Type of Racquetball Activity	Training solo on court, own ball	1 person training on court with 1 coach and 1 parent at safe distance, only one of whom is permitted to handle a ball	Friendly match between 2 members	Friendly doubles match between 4 members	Doubles league play (same province)	Return to normal operations
	Training or playing a game with a member of the same household	2 training/ doubles partners training only one ball handler	League play within one club only	League play between clubs	Host closed provincial level tournament	Host national, open or international tournament
		2 players with 1 coach off court, limited to drills or "conditioned game play" where players are kept to specific areas of the court to retain distancing guidelines	Group lessons with 3 or less players	Local singles tournament play	Summer camps	Invite international players for an exhibition, demo or clinic
			3 players training with 1 coach on court	Group clinic with up to 6 players and 1 coach on court	Specified number of spectators permitted	Provincial doubles tournament

				3 or 4 players playing "King of the Court"		Unlimited spectators permitted
				Limited spectators permitted with appropriate (2m) physical distancing		
Risk Mitigation	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5	Phase 6
Forego handshake	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Face Shield	✓	✓	✓			
Mask in facility	✓	✓	✓			
Own ball	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Bins for personal gear	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Court sanitizing between sessions	✓	✓	✓	✓		
No locker room/shower	✓	✓	✓			
No towels available	✓	✓	✓			
No sweat wall wiping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓