



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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Updated MDHHS order allows contact sports to resume with risk reduction measures

LANSING, Mich. – Today, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) [updated its current epidemic order](#) to allow contact sports to resume as of Monday, Feb. 8, provided masks are worn during practices and competition. If masks cannot be worn, participants must be regularly tested for COVID-19 consistent with guidelines issued by MDHHS. Safety protocols like wearing masks and testing will help keep kids, coaches and families safe and allow our schools to remain open for in-person instruction. The order remains in effect through Monday, March 29.

"We continue to make progress in reducing cases and hospitalizations, helping protect our families and frontline workers and saving lives. Now, starting February 8, contact sports can resume with safety measures in place," said Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. "Michigan continues to be a national leader in fighting this virus, and we must continue using a fact-based approach so we can return to a strong economy and normal day-to-day activities. One of the most important things Michiganders can do is to make a plan to get the safe and effective vaccine when it's available to you. And as always, mask up and maintain six feet of social distancing. We all have a personal responsibility to slow the spread of the virus so we can end this pandemic together."

"We are pleased at our continued progress in Michigan that has allowed us to take this step forward in a phased approach," said Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, chief medical executive and chief deputy for health at MDHHS. "As a parent and former student-athlete myself, I get how important athletics are to our children's physical and mental health. However, parents and athletes need to understand the risk involved with contact sports if they choose to participate. Sports that require frequent closeness between players make it more difficult to prevent disease transmission even when mitigation measures are in place, including masks. Even when not required, we urge teams to implement a testing program to protect athletes, coaches and their families."

MDHHS had been closely monitoring [three metrics](#) for stabilization or declines over the past several weeks, and Michigan continues to see improvements. In recent days:

- Hospital capacity dedicated to COVID-19 patients has been in 10-week decline, with current capacity at 6.6% for beds with COVID-19 patients. Peaked at 19.6% on Tuesday, Dec. 4.
- Overall case rates: Currently at 159 cases per million after peaking at 740 cases per million on Saturday, Nov. 14. Rate has been in solid decline for 24 days. Three MERC regions in the state are now below 150 cases per million people: the Detroit, Traverse City and Upper Peninsula regions.
- Positivity rate: currently at 4.9% and declining. This is the first time positivity has been this low since mid-October

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Contact sports are allowed as long as participants are masked during play or practice. For sports where masks cannot be worn and social distancing cannot be maintained all participants must be tested consistent with the program specified in the Testing and Additional Mitigation Measures for Athletic Practice and Play section of MDHHS's Interim Guidance for Athletics which will be available online at [Michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/coronavirus) on Sunday, Feb. 7. Sports organizers are encouraged to administer a testing program even if it is not required.

FEB. 8		Indoor	Outdoor
 SPORTS AND COVID-19 • Contact sports that can be played with a mask can proceed with contact practice and competition beginning Monday, Feb. 8. • Where contact sports participants cannot remain masked, they <u>must</u> be tested consistent with the testing protocol specified in MDHHS's Guidance for Athletics issued February 7, 2021. • Non-contact sports where distancing can be maintained and a mask is not possible can continue with no changes. For more information about sports and COVID-19, visit Michigan.gov/Coronavirus. Questions or concerns can be emailed to COVID19@michigan.gov. 	Non-contact sports		 *Where athletes are playing a non-contact sport outdoors and can consistently maintain social distance, a mask is not required.
	Contact sports		
	Contact sports and cannot mask safely		

Participants need to maintain six feet of distance when not actively engaged in play and wear face masks at all times. Spectators are allowed with up to 250 people in stadiums that seat less than 10,000 and up to 500 people at venues that seat over 10,000 people.

"Today's announcement is possible because of our progress over the last two months," said Elizabeth Hertel, MDHHS director. "Michiganders need to remain vigilant, however, as we now have a new more easily transmitted variant of this virus present in our state. All Michigan residents need to minimize their risk by avoiding gatherings, wearing masks properly, social distancing, and making a plan to get the safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine when it is their turn."

"I want to thank Governor Whitmer and her administration for the decision to begin winter contact sports competition," said Dr. Michael Shabler, superintendent of Rockford Public Schools. "I applaud their priority to keep students and adults safe during the pandemic and for the decision to provide student-athletes the opportunity to compete."

Indoor residential and non-residential gatherings are limited to 10 people and two households. MDHHS continues to urge families to avoid indoor gatherings or to pick a single other household to interact with consistent with [guidance already released by the department](#). Families are encouraged to stay home as much as possible to maintain momentum and to protect loved ones. Families are also encouraged to [Mask Up, Mask Right](#), using guidance for what masks to wear and how to wear them.

The epidemic order continues to temporarily pause other venues and activities where participants have close physical contacts and are not consistently masked, like water parks.

As before, employees who work in jobs that cannot be performed from home can continue to go to work, while employees who can work from home should continue to do so.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and CDC.gov/Coronavirus. To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit Michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine.

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[Feb. 8 Gatherings Order Infographic](#)
[Interim Sports Guidance](#)
[Sports Mask and Testing Infographic](#)
[Social Activities Guidance](#)
[Safe Social Pods Guidance](#)
[Key Metrics Infographic](#)