



UPDATED Health Protocols in Physical and Health Education

Ideas for Management

Please note: This resource is meant to complement and enhance the recommendations and guidelines provided by Public Health. If you are unsure about any situation, please contact your public health unit for specific guidance.

Latest update: August 19, 2021



INTRODUCTION

Back to school is going to be filled with expectations and excitement, and we know teachers are resilient and creative. You have the skills, abilities and mindset to support your students - and each other - as we navigate yet another year of health protocols. There will be challenges, but we are in this together and all have a role to play to ensure that schools are able to re-open in a safe way. Additional new and in many cases lighter health protocols will promise more opportunities to engage the students in change the way that you deliver physical education activities. That said, as younger students will be retuning to school unvaccinated, and even those over the age of 12 may still be hesitant there are still strategies and approaches that can be implemented to foster a safe, supportive learning environment while the DELTA variant still poses a risk.

WAYS TO SUPPORT

Age Appropriate



Be sure to acknowledge the pandemic in an age appropriate way.

Space to Discuss



Give students a safe space to discuss their experiences in a group or individually.

Listen



Listen to your students and answer questions that they may have.

PHE Canada has consulted with experts and organizations to pull together the following list of ideas and tips of how best to approach your physical education programming. We recognize that every school community is unique, and that there is not one right way to approach teaching this in this learning environment. We do know that teachers are dedicated and caring individuals who will **find a way to make the best of the current situation for the health and well-being of their students.**

01

ROUTINES

Within the first few weeks of school, **new routines should be established and reinforced to ensure that students are comfortable and familiar with what they are responsible for doing to keep everyone safe.** When discussing routines and health protocols, be sure to approach the conversation in a welcoming and supportive way. The most important first step to having a safe and inclusive school is ensuring that students feel comfortable in their new learning environment.

- On the first day of school, **calmly review all of the routines and health procedures that students will participate in.** Clearly outline when and where things will occur and how students are actively involved in the process.
- **Try to keep a positive attitude and tone** while we are all dealing with a new learning environment. This is particularly important when explaining routines to students, keep the focus on how we are all working together to stay healthy.
- Post reminders on the walls of classrooms and hallways to **show when and how to wash hands, wear a mask, and how far to stay away from other students.** Remind students of these rules frequently in the first few weeks of school and as required following that.
- **Focus on positive reinforcement** and celebrate students when they follow routines. As with any routine, it will take some time for students to remember and be comfortable following them - a gentle reminder will go a long way.

02

HANDWASHING

- Students should wash their hands **before and after physical education** with warm water and soap for a minimum of 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, hand sanitizer may be used as a substitute.

03

FACILITIES

- Physical education should be delivered outdoors as much as possible. Being outside presents the lowest risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- Here are some ideas for occasions where physical education cannot be delivered outdoors:
 - Adding grid lines to floor/grass/pavement to show proper distance between students.
 - Moving equipment into larger spaces (spinning bikes, yoga mats, pylons, poly spots, etc.).
 - Creating stations in different areas of the school for different class times to ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing techniques can be applied on each space between classes.
- Scheduling will be more complicated this year, but when done properly, in consultation with all staff members, it will ensure all spaces are used effectively throughout the day. **Assign classes to different areas within the school** to allow for proper cleaning and sanitizing between each use.
- Get creative about what activities can be completed (e.g. continuous movement completed in one space, target games, cooperative games, etc.).



04

CHANGE ROOMS



- When possible, it is **advised to avoid the use of change rooms.**
- Understanding that there may be situations where change rooms are required, **firm limits on the number of students in the change room at once must be enforced** to ensure social distancing is possible at all times.
- Only one class should be in the change room at one time. This may require **staggering classes** and longer transition times between classes.
- Within the change room, consider adding tape or signage on benches and floors to **ensure that 2m of space between each student is maintained at all times.**
- Minimal personal belongings should be brought into the changeroom. Only a change of clothing, shoes, and a water bottle should be needed by each student.
- Showers should not be used by staff or students.
- **Signs indicating the maximum capacity should be posted** on the doors and limits strictly enforced.
- Change rooms should be cleaned after each use.

05

EQUIPMENT

- Using **no equipment provides the lowest risk of transmission.**
- When equipment is being used, students should be assigned their own “kit” for the activity. That is to say, each student should have their own bean bag, skipping rope, hula hoop, tennis ball, badminton racket, etc. and **ensure that sharing of equipment does not occur.**
- Fitness equipment that does not require use of hands such as **agility ladders, pylons, hurdles, floor markers are suitable for warm-ups and personal fitness routines** provided that physical distancing guidelines are enforced throughout the activity.
- For sending and receiving activities, **minimize the amount of hand contact there is on equipment.** For instance, if feet, sticks or racquets are able to be the only contact with the ball/puck/birdie, it will be less likely to pose a risk to students and teachers.
- All **equipment should be cleaned and sanitized before and after each use.** Discuss with your administration the need for appropriate cleaning products in each of the physical education facilities that will be utilized.
- If you are teaching multiple physical education classes throughout the day, **use different equipment for each class.** It may be easiest to have each class focus on a different skill/activity/sport to decrease the amount of overlap among students and equipment.
- Once students are finished with a piece of equipment it should be placed in a bin or designated area to be cleaned and sanitized.

06

CLEANING AND SANITIZATION

- All equipment and surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized between each use.
- Set up cleaning and sanitizing stations as well as signage so students are familiar with where to place their equipment when they are done with it. Review these procedures frequently with students.
- Work with your school administration to **determine the products and protocols for cleaning.** Be sure to consider all types of materials and surfaces (wood, plastic, cloth, metal, etc.)

07

MASKS

- As suggested above, physical education should be delivered outdoors whenever possible.
- **Masks should be worn** wherever physical distancing is not possible, whether in or outdoors.
- It is **not** advisable to wear a mask during intense cardio vascular endurance activities. Plan accordingly to ensure that vigorous intensity activities are only done in areas where masks would not be required.
- If students are required to wear a mask in their physical education space, **select lower impact activities to minimize risks.**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Provincial and Territorial Return to School Guidelines: <https://phecanada.ca/activate/return-school-phe/provincial-and-territorial-return-school-guidelines>
- National Sport Organization Recommendations¹: <https://phecanada.ca/activate/return-school-phe/national-sport-organization-recommendations>
- Sport for Life: <https://sportforlife.ca>
- Active for Life: <https://activeforlife.com>
- Health Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/physical-activity-your-health.html>
- Participaction: <https://www.participaction.com/en-ca>
- Public Health Agency of Canada - Child and Youth Areas: shorturl.at/grJOR
- Increasing Outdoor Play in Early Learning and Child Care in the Context of COVID-19: <https://www.lawson.ca/op-elcc-covid19.pdf>
- Sick Kids Hospital Return to School Guidelines: shorturl.at/CPTW8
- SHAPE America: COVID Resources: <https://www.shapeamerica.org/covid19-resources.aspx>

¹ Please note: these are not written for an educational context, but do contain valuable insights into how to run different sports in a safe way.



CONTACT US



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With respectful acknowledgement that the land where PHE Canada's National Office is located is on the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg People.