

Youth sports safety during a pandemic

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Besides the obvious physical benefits, youth sports provide social interaction that also can strengthen mental health. But most sports require close contact and interaction among athletes. Amid the COVID-19 setting, this poses a dilemma.

The [youth sports](#) playing field has changed significantly in 2020.

"Sports do require oftentimes close contact, sharing of equipment and other things that do pose risks. How do we do that in the safest way possible I think is the million-dollar question," says Dr. David Soma, a Mayo Clinic pediatrician who specializes in [sports medicine](#).

Dr. Soma says sports provide valuable mental and physical benefits for kids, but the COVID-19 pandemic is a whole new ballgame.

"If we are going to have kids play sports, we need to really strongly encourage a lot of those social safety measures: social distancing, hand hygiene, masking when possible."

He also recommends screening athletes for COVID-19 symptoms before practices and games. And if an athlete has recovered from COVID-19 ...

... "There's a lot of discussion right now about the potential development of heart complications following COVID-19 infection, and that when they go back to sports, there could be a risk. I think that we need to just be monitoring that very carefully," says Dr. Soma.

Dr. Soma says limiting the number of people at events and masking everyone on the sidelines and in the stands is also important.

Information in this post was accurate at the time of its posting. Due to the fluid nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, [scientific understanding](#), along with guidelines and recommendations, may have changed since the original publication date.

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