



Squash Canada

Return to Play Recommendations for Players

In light of provincial and municipal governments beginning to outline their plans for reducing or removing COVID-19 related restrictions, Squash Canada is issuing its 'return to play' recommendations for players, once squash clubs and facilities re-open.

COVID-19 has been affecting different parts of the country in different ways, with different timing, and provincial government re-opening strategies. Consequently, it is anticipated that it will be possible for people to return to playing squash safely in some cities and provinces sooner than in others.

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 transmission while in the facility and while practicing or playing squash.

To do your part, Squash Canada recommends that you follow these guidelines.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

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

1. In squash, players are often in close physical contact; much less than two metres apart.
2. Epidemiologic evidence suggests this virus transmits readily by respiratory droplets and contact. Squash involves prolonged exertion, which may lead to increased respiratory activity.
3. Squash is played indoors.
4. Squash is played in an enclosed, confined space.
5. Squash is an activity for life. As such, a certain segment of the playing population is 50 and older, the demographic Canadian public health authorities deem most at risk of COVID-19.

Due to the nature of the game of squash, even with the below recommendations in place, it 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, squash 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.

BEFORE YOU PLAY

1. Ensure that your city or region allows squash play based on the government authorities' criteria for the progressive lifting of confinement measures, and that your municipality permits the use of squash 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. Squash 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 squash session.
6. Only one parent or guardian should accompany a junior player to any squash 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 squash 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 squash balls. While there is no direct evidence that the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus strain that causes COVID-19) can survive on a squash 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 squash balls. Remove with a racquet any squash balls that may have been left on court.
13. Handling of the same ball by different players during a game should be prevented. Three different options are suggested, as agreed to in advance by the players or body governing the play:
 - 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.
- OR -
 - ii. Relax the official rule that states a player must throw the ball into the air with their hand so as to permit the ball to be picked up with the racquet and then tossed with the racquet before the serve.
- OR -
 - iii. With junior players who play with a high bounce ball, allow the player to bounce the ball with his or her racquet prior to serving.
14. Consider spraying squash balls with a disinfectant spray after each squash session. The use of new balls on a regular basis is strongly recommended.
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 squash 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 squash 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 squash facility to avoid touching a tap or water fountain.
 - viii. If you cough or sneeze, do so in a tissue or lift one's collar over mouth and nose and cough or sneeze under one's shirt.

- 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.
- x. Avoid using communal club equipment, such as racquets and eyewear. Use personal equipment only.
- xi. Consider taking extra precautions by wearing waterproof gloves while playing.
- xii. Certified squash eyewear should be worn on court at all times, even if squash rules and policies do not normally require them for you, in order to prevent transmission of droplets to eyes.
- xiii. Consider wearing a full-face shield to prevent both reception and transmission of droplet infection. Note that a face shield may not necessarily be certified eyewear, and you may be required to also use certified eyewear if mandatory eyewear requirements normally apply to you.
- xiv. 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 squash. 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 squash. Nor do individuals at the outset have experience of having tried such previously. There are some CAUTIONS:
 - Playing squash 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 squash 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 squash 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.

Squash 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 'let' 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 squash ball. Observe the "Own balls" recommendations in 12 and 13 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 at the foot of the tin.
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 at the foot of the tin, retreating to opposite corners from your opponent as boxers do.

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.