

RETURN TO PLAY

COVID 19 RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL



To help delay and mitigate the spread of COVID-19, governments across the world are encouraging people to stay at home when possible and adopt physical distancing and special hygiene measures in public. Concurrently, health experts recognize the role of outdoor recreation and exercise in promoting mental health, physical fitness, and cognitive development. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommends](#) daily physical activity for both children (60 minutes a day) and adults (30 minutes a day).

So, how can people exercise and return to play in a manner that minimizes the prospect of contracting or transmitting the virus? This general informational resource, created by the Aspen Institute with the support of medical experts, is designed to help people of all ages assess risk in a variety of common sport and recreational activities.

The CDC currently recommends [no organized sports or activities](#), given the many challenges of containing the virus in group settings. So, priority consideration in this document is given to lower-risk forms of participation, most of which involve free play or individual training. As COVID-19 restrictions lift and organized activities return, additional insights will be added.

Two Aspen Institute programs partnered to develop this resource:



The Sports & Society Program's mission is to convene leaders, foster dialogue, and inspire solutions that help sport serve the public interest. Since 2011, the program has provided a venue where thought leadership and breakthrough strategies can be developed on a range of opportunities. Our signature initiative, **Project Play**, develops, applies and shares knowledge that helps stakeholders build healthy communities through sports. To learn more, visit projectplay.us



The Health, Medicine and Society (HMS) Program, the domestic health initiative at the Aspen Institute, seeks out bold, creative, and practical solutions to the health and medicine challenges facing the United States in the 21st century. As a magnet for some of the nation's sharpest leaders, intellects, and practitioners, HMS promotes cross-disciplinary learning, disruptive thinking, and broad dissemination of knowledge designed to build better health for all. To learn more, visit as.pn/hms

The materials are based on CDC guidelines and were reviewed by experts from the [American College of Sports Medicine](#) and the [Hospital for Special Surgery](#) which also offer free resources. We also thank officials at various national sport governing bodies for sharing their input.

This document is a general informational resource and should not be treated as medical or expert advice to participate in any activity. Rely on the information at your own risk, and consult the most up-to-date recommendations of federal, state and local public health officials. Consult your own qualified health providers or other advisors about any specific issues or circumstances you might have.

Updated May 27, 2020.

GENERAL GUIDANCE

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) offers recommendations on how members of the public can limit the spread of the coronavirus. They currently include:

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces and exercise equipment (including balls).
- Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Wear a cloth face covering that covers your nose and mouth in public settings.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from non-household members. *Note: [research is ongoing on appropriate physical distance for bodies in motion.](#)*
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Stay home if you are sick.

Check local public health recommendations and mandates in your area, found on your state and local government website, before heading anywhere for a workout, especially considering local shelter-in-place and face-covering ordinances. Find a directory of state health departments [here](#), and get the latest data on COVID-19 cases and deaths by U.S. county [here](#).

Other Return to Play guidance: [US Olympic and Paralympic Committee on Sports and Events](#) • [CDC on Parks and Recreational Facilities](#) • [National Recreation and Park Association on Slowing the Spread](#) • [CDC Considerations for Youth Sport](#) • [NFHS Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities](#)

RISK CATEGORIES

Risk categories are assigned relative to other ways of participating in that sport or activity, based on the latest public health and scientific understandings of COVID-19 and how it can be transmitted.

Activities are segmented into three types of risk posed both to participants and others, based on general characteristics:



Lowest Risk

Individual exercise or training at home, alone or with shared household members, with owned and sanitized equipment

Medium Risk

Individual exercise or training in public, alone or with shared household members, with owned and sanitized equipment; individual exercise or training in public with non-shared household members physically distant.

Highest Risk

Any group play or training with non-household members not physically distant in private or public; any usage of shared equipment.

“Physical distance” is currently defined by the CDC as 6 feet away or more from a non-household member. Research is ongoing on appropriate physical distance for bodies in motion. “Household member” is defined as anyone living with you. “Shared equipment” is defined as equipment shared with or owned by non-household members.

In the current environment and consistent with the views of public health experts, The Aspen Institute recommends engagement in the lowest risk activities with the necessary safety precautions (e.g. protective gear, safe play). We also recognize that some of the highest risk activities are currently not permitted by the shelter-in-place guidance of some state and local authorities.

FITNESS AND FUN ACTIVITIES

BICYCLING



Lowest Risk

Use your own indoor cycle; ride outside alone or with household members with your own equipment in less populated setting.



Medium Risk

Ride alone or with household members outside with your own equipment (only ride in a pace line or close group/pack with household members) in more populated setting, remaining physically distant from any non-household members.



Highest Risk

Join group ride; ride with non-household members not keeping recommended physical distance; indoor cycle at public gym; cycle with shared equipment (e.g., bike, pump, rented bike, etc).

Sources and resources: [USA Cycling](#)

BOWLING



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (release and finish drills, general fitness, strength training), at home (inside, backyard, driveway) alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

Perform individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members or with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize any equipment.



Highest Risk

Play in public alley; participate in group play; not maintaining recommended physical distancing; not sanitizing personal or shared bowling ball or other equipment.

Sources and resources: [United States Bowling Congress](#)

CLIMBING



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (general fitness, strength training, hangboard workouts) at home (backyard, inside home, at-home climbing wall), alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

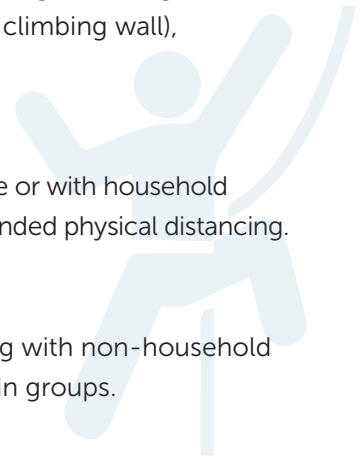
Perform individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members, or with non-household members maintaining recommended physical distancing.



Highest Risk

Perform climbing activities at indoor facilities or at your local crag with non-household members not maintaining recommended physical distancing or in groups.

Sources and resources: [USA Climbing](#) • [Climbing Wall Association](#)



DANCE



Lowest Risk

Dance at home alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

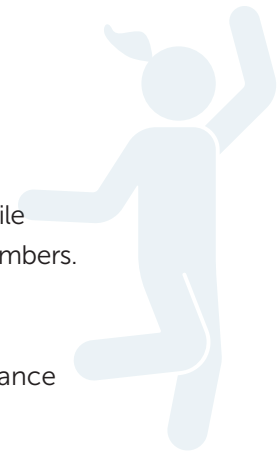
Dance in public outdoor spaces alone or with household members while maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members.



Highest Risk

Dance in public studio; not maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members.

Sources and resources: [USA Dancing](#) • [Dance USA](#)



PARKOUR



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (balance, ground movement, jumping, calisthenics), at home (driveway, backyard, living room) alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

Perform individual skill development activities in a local park, or uncrowded outdoor public space (nature area/roads/sidewalks) alone or with household members, maintaining physical distance from non-household members; limit the touching of surfaces.



Highest Risk

Train with non-household members not maintaining recommended physical distance in high density spaces; not limiting touch of non-sanitized surfaces.

Sources and resources: [US Parkour](#)

RUNNING



Lowest Risk

Run on personal equipment (e.g. treadmill in your home); do sprints at home; run alone or with members of household in uncrowded nature area/roads/sidewalks with wide paths (keep recommended physical distance).



Medium Risk

Run alone or with members of household in more populated rural/suburban/urban setting, remaining physically distant from any non-household members.



Highest Risk

Run in crowded areas; run with non-household members in close proximity; run indoors on shared equipment (e.g., treadmill in a shared gym).

Sources and resources: [New York Road Runners](#) • [Running USA](#)

SKATEBOARDING



Lowest Risk

Enjoy fun activities and individual skill development (balance, footwork, tricks), at home (driveway, backyard) alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

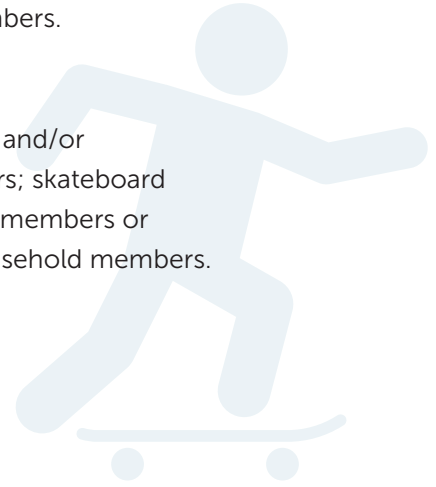
Skateboard in skate park alone or with household members and/or maintaining physical distance from non-household members; skateboard in public (e.g., road, sidewalks, parking lots) with household members or maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members.



Highest Risk

Skateboard with non-household members not maintaining recommended physical distance.

Sources and resources: [USA Skateboarding](#) • [Tony Hawk Foundation](#)



WALKING/HIKING



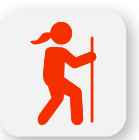
Lowest Risk

Walk/hike alone or with members of household in uncrowded space with wide paths/roads/sidewalks (keeping recommended physical distance); walk on personal equipment (e.g. treadmill in your home).



Medium Risk

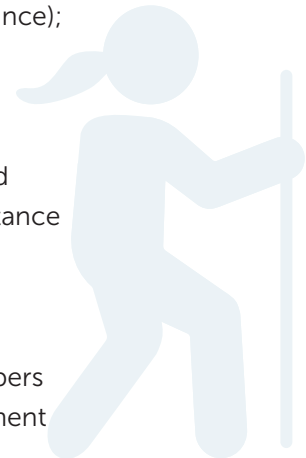
Walk/hike alone or with members of household in more populated rural/suburban/urban setting, keeping recommended physical distance from non-household members.



Highest Risk

Walk/hike in crowded areas; walk/hike with non-household members without keeping physical distance; walk indoors on shared equipment (e.g., treadmill in a shared gym).

Sources and resources: [National Recreation and Park Association](#)



WEIGHTLIFTING



Lowest Risk

Lift at home alone or with household members; using personal equipment or household objects.



Medium Risk

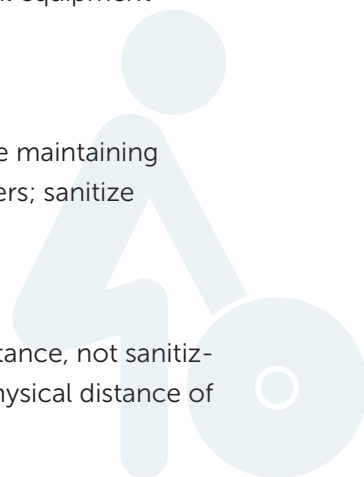
Lift in outdoor spaces alone or with household members while maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members; sanitize personal equipment; use personal chalk.



Highest Risk

Lift in public gym, not maintaining recommended physical distance, not sanitizing personal or shared equipment, not using personal chalk. physical distance of non-household members; using shared equipment.

Sources and resources: [USA Weightlifting](#) • [National Strength and Conditioning Association](#)



YOGA



Lowest Risk

Practice yoga alone or with household members at home.



Medium Risk

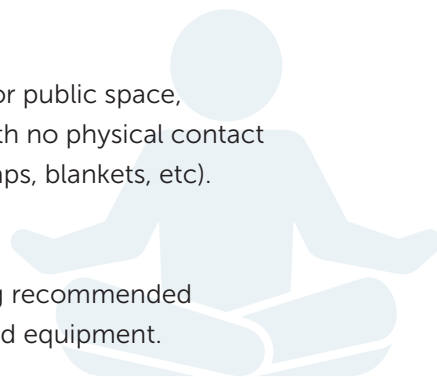
Practice yoga alone or with household members in outdoor public space, or with non-household members physically distant and with no physical contact and use of your own sanitized equipment (mat, blocks, straps, blankets, etc).



Highest Risk

Participate in indoor or outdoor yoga class not maintaining recommended physical distance of non-household members; using shared equipment.

Sources and resources: [Yoga Alliance](#)



OTHER LOW-RISK FUN AND FITNESS ACTIVITIES TO CONSIDER

When CDC recommendations on preventing spread of the virus are followed, shared equipment is not used, and activities are enjoyed alone or with household members:

- Outdoor activities such as archery, camping, cornhole, cross-country skiing, dance, fishing, frisbee, hopscotch, hula hoop, hunting, jump rope, kayak, roller skating, sailing, shadow tag, snowshoe, and spikeball
- Indoor activities at home such as dance, rowing machine, table tennis, and Tai Chi

Virtual fitness or P.E. classes on social media and group participation platforms (e.g. Zoom, Skype, Instagram)

- Online apps for individual fun or sport training activities

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SPORT ACTIVITIES

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL



Lowest Risk

Participate in any fun or training activities (swing drills, catch, solo toss, footwork) alone or with household members at home with your own sanitized equipment.



Medium Risk

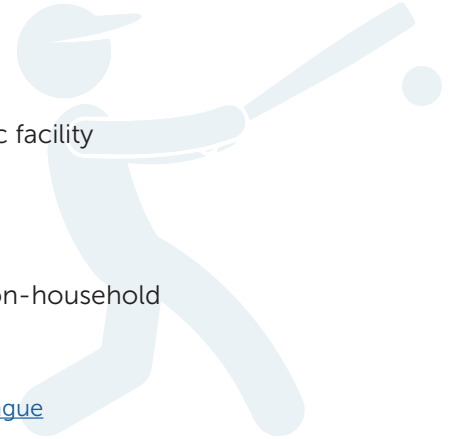
Train or play alone or with household members at a public facility with your own sanitized equipment.



Highest Risk

Participate in any team or large group pickup play with non-household members and shared equipment.

Sources and resources: [USA Baseball](#) • [USA Softball](#) • [Little League](#)



BASKETBALL



Lowest Risk

Dribble, shoot and participate in other ballhandling drills or activities alone or with household members at home in driveway or backyard with your own sanitized equipment.



Medium Risk

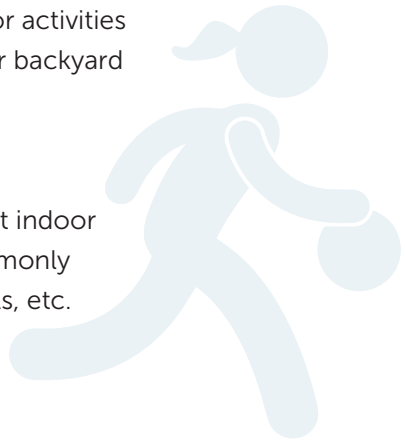
Engage in the above activities with household members at indoor or outdoor public court, making sure to sanitize any commonly shared surfaces such as gate handles, benches, basketballs, etc.



Highest Risk

Participate in any team or large group pickup play with non-household members and shared balls.

Resources: [USA Basketball](#) • [Jr. NBA](#)



CHEERLEADING



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development (jumps, flexibility, tumbling, choreography, general fitness, strength training) at home (backyard, inside home), alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

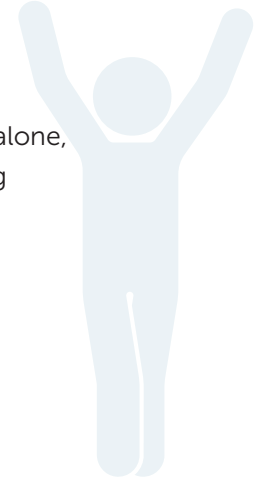
Perform individual skill development activities in public outdoor spaces alone, with household members, or with non-household members maintaining recommended physical distancing.



Highest Risk

Participate in team or group activities in gym; use shared equipment; not following recommended physical distancing guidelines.

Sources and resources: [USA Cheer](#)



FIELD HOCKEY



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (dribble, passing, footwork/agility drills, shooting drills, etc.) alone or with household members at home with your own sanitized equipment.



Medium Risk

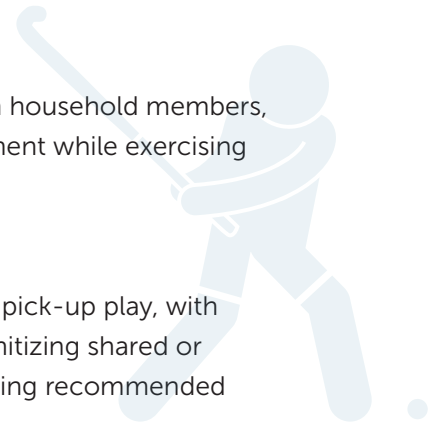
Perform individual skill development activities alone or with household members, in an outdoor public venue with your own sanitized equipment while exercising appropriate physical distancing.



Highest Risk

Participate in any group, team, or multi-team structured or pick-up play, with non-household members; using shared equipment; not sanitizing shared or personal equipment (e.g., cages, balls, cones); not maintaining recommended physical distancing guidelines.

Sources and resources: [USA Field Hockey](#)



FOOTBALL



Lowest Risk

Train or engage in fun activities (e.g., catch, footwork, sprints) alone or with household member at home using own sanitized equipment.



Medium Risk

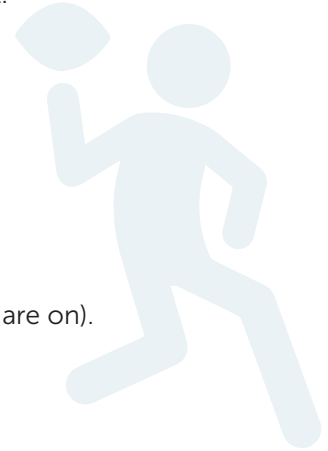
Same as the above, but in public spaces.



Highest Risk

Participate in any organized team or large group pickup play with non-household members and shared equipment (better if gloves are on).

Sources and resources: [USA Football](#) • [NFL](#)



GOLF



Lowest Risk

Putt or chip balls at home.



Medium Risk

If on golf course; carry own clubs or ride alone in sanitized golf cart and abide all updated club and/or US Golf Association (USGA) guidelines; maintain recommended physical distance from non-household members; keep golf bag in your possession at all times; use remote check-in; no bunker rakes; modified flagsticks and cups; with no common use distribution of tees/scorecards/pencils/ball markers.

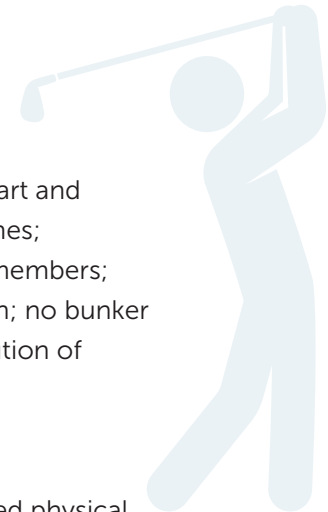


Highest Risk

Play with non-household members not maintaining recommended physical distance; make physical contact (e.g., handshake, high-five, fist bump), and ignore club and/or USGA guidelines using shared equipment.

Sources and resources:

[Golf Course Superintendents Association of America](#) • [PGA of America](#)
[US Golf Association](#)



GYNAMASTICS



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (general fitness, strength training, flexibility/holds, tumbling) at home (backyard, inside home), alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

Perform individual skill development activities in public outdoor spaces alone, with household members or with non-household members, maintaining recommended physical distancing; sanitize any personal equipment.



Highest Risk

Perform team or group activities using shared equipment in gym; not sanitizing personal or shared equipment; not following recommended physical distancing guidelines; share chalk.

Sources and resources: [USA Gymnastics](#) • [USA Gym Parents](#)

ICE HOCKEY



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (dryland training, general fitness, strength training), at home (inside, backyard, driveway) alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

Perform individual skill development activities in public outdoor spaces alone or with household members or with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize any equipment.



Highest Risk

Participate in any group, team, or multi-team structured or pick-up play, with non-household members; practice in public ice rink; using shared equipment; not sanitizing personal or shared equipment; not maintain recommended physical distancing guidelines..

Sources and resources: [USA Hockey](#)

LACROSSE



Lowest Risk

Engage in sport-specific training and related activities (wallball, passing, footwork drills, shooting drills, etc.) alone or with household members at home with your own sanitized equipment.



Medium Risk

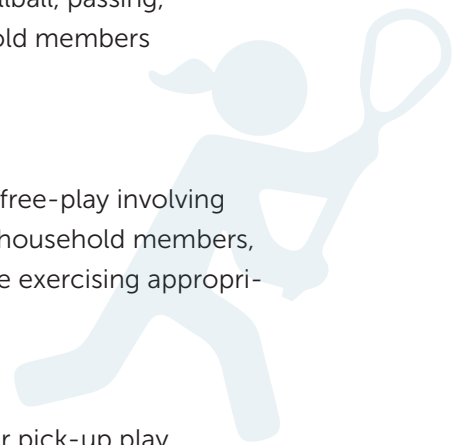
Engage in the activities above alongside shooting drills or free-play involving passing, running and scooping ground ball, alone or with household members, in a public venue with your own sanitized equipment while exercising appropriate social distancing.



Highest Risk

Participate in any group, team, or multi-team structured or pick-up play, with non-household members (including coaches and officials) and shared equipment.

Sources and resources: [US Lacrosse](#)



MARTIAL ARTS



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities at home alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

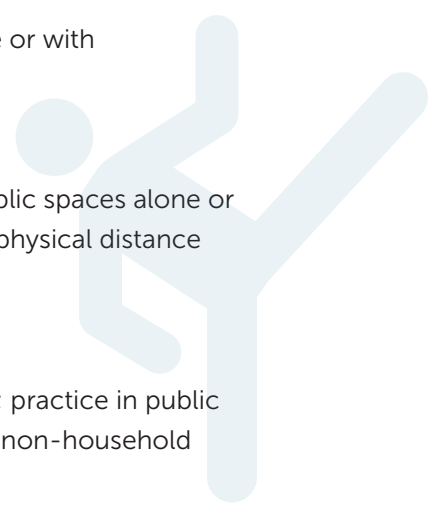
Perform individual skill development activities in outdoor public spaces alone or with household members while maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members. Sanitize any equipment.



Highest Risk

Participate in any martial arts with non-household members; practice in public gym; not maintaining recommended physical distance from non-household members; not sanitizing shared or personal equipment.

Sources and resources: [USA Judo](#) • [USA Karate](#) • [USA Taekwondo](#)



PICKLEBALL



Lowest Risk

Train or engage in activities alone or with household members at home (shadow swing, dinking, footwork) with your own equipment.



Medium Risk

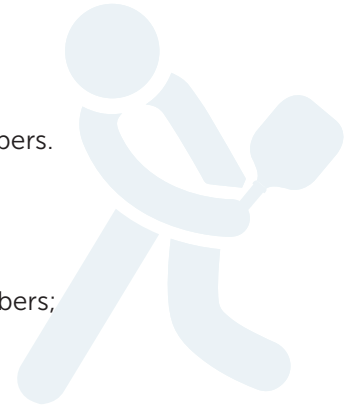
Play or train on public or shared court only with household members.



Highest Risk

Play or train on public or shared court with non-household members; no measures taken to minimize touching of shared objects.

Sources and resources: [USA Pickleball](#)



ROWING



Lowest Risk

Row/erg on personal equipment (e.g. ergometer at your home); perform individual skill development activities at home alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

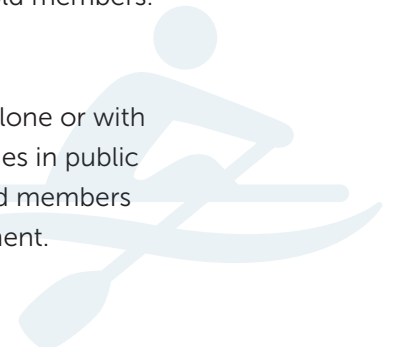
Row on personal equipment (e.g. ergometer or single) in public alone or with household members; perform individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members or with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize any equipment.



Highest Risk

Rowing in crowded areas; rowing with non-household members in close proximity or same boat; erg indoors on shared equipment.

Sources and resources: [US Rowing](#)



SOCCER



Lowest Risk

Train or enjoy exercises at home (e.g., juggle, cone drills, footwork, passing) alone or with household members and with your own equipment.



Medium Risk

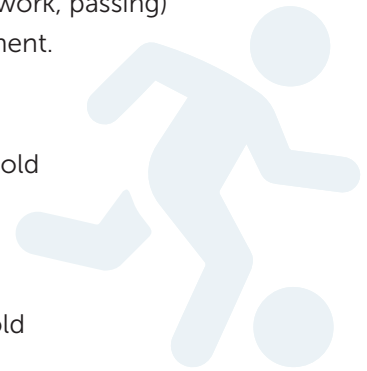
Engage in any activities in public spaces alone or with household members, and with sanitized balls.



Highest Risk

Engage in team or large group pickup play with non-household members and shared balls.

Sources and resources: [US Soccer Federation](#) • [US Soccer Foundation](#) • [DC SCORES](#)



SWIMMING

According to current CDC guidance, there is no evidence that COVID-19 can be spread to humans through the water. Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of pools should reduce risk of COVID-19.



Lowest Risk

Swim in your own chlorinated pool (laps, tread water); engage in dryland training at home alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

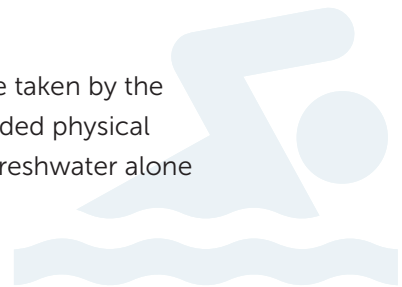
Swim in chlorinated public pool as long as proper steps are taken by the operator to reduce the spread of the virus, and recommended physical distancing is practiced; swim, snorkel, surf in open salt or freshwater alone or with household.



Highest Risk

Use of water parks and water playgrounds, venues where physical distance is difficult to control; swim, snorkel, surf in open salt or freshwater with non-household members; dryland training within six feet of non-household members.

Sources and resources: [CDC \(Water and COVID-19 FAQs\)](#) • [CDC on Aquatic Venues](#) • [USA Swimming](#)



TENNIS



Lowest Risk

Train or engage in activities alone or with household members at home (wall rally, hot hands, shadow swing, footwork) with own equipment.



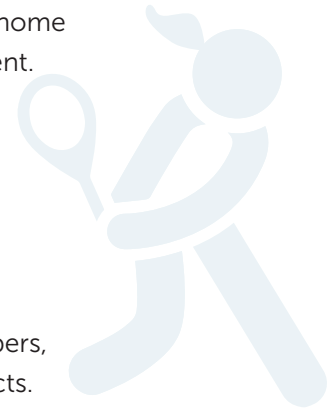
Medium Risk

Play or train on public or shared court with household members.



Highest Risk

Play or train on public or shared court with non-household members, and with no measures taken to minimize touching of shared objects.



Sources and resources: [US Tennis Association](#)

TRIATHLON



Lowest Risk

Swim: swim in your own chlorinated pool (laps, tread water) or in open salt or freshwater alone or with household members in a low populated area; engage in dryland training at home alone or with household members. **Bike:** use your own indoor cycle; ride outside alone or with household members with your own equipment in less populated setting. **Run:** run on personal equipment (e.g. treadmill in your home); do sprints at home; run alone or with members of household in less populated setting. Multiple Discipline Training: conduct in short and focused sessions using your own equipment and facilities at home.



Medium Risk

Swim: swim in open salt or freshwater, or chlorinated public pool as long as proper steps are taken by the operator to reduce the spread of the virus, and recommended physical distancing is practiced. **Bike:** ride alone or with household members outside with your own equipment (only ride in a pace line or close group/pack with household members) in more populated setting, remaining physically distant from any non-household members. **Run:** run alone or with members of household in more populated rural/suburban/urban setting, remaining physically distant from any non-household members.



Highest Risk

Swim: swim in chlorinated public venues where physical distance is difficult to control; swim in open salt or freshwater with non-household members; dryland training not maintain recommended physical distance of non-household members. **Bike:** join group ride; ride with non-household members not keeping recommended physical distance; indoor cycle at public gym; cycle with shared equipment (e.g., bike, pump, rented bike, etc). **Run:** run in crowded areas; run with non-household members in close proximity; run indoors on shared equipment (e.g., treadmill in a shared gym).

Sources and resources: [USA Triathlon](#)

ULTIMATE FRISBEE



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (throwing practice, general fitness, strength training), at home (backyard, driveway, in-home) alone or with household members.



Medium Risk

Perform individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members or perform individual skill development activities with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize frisbee.



Highest Risk

Participate in team or group play; not maintaining recommended physical distancing; not sanitizing frisbees.

Sources and resources: [USA Ultimate](#)

VOLLEYBALL



Lowest Risk

Perform individual skill development activities (passing drills, blocking, hitting, setting, serving, general fitness, strength training), at home (backyard, driveway, in-home), alone or with household members; use personal net at home to play with household members.



Medium Risk

The above individual skill development activities in public spaces alone or with household members or individual skill development with non-household members following recommended physical distancing; sanitize volleyballs.



Highest Risk

Participate in any team or group play; not maintaining recommended physical distancing guidelines; not sanitizing volleyballs.

Sources and resources: [USA Volleyball](#)

Also worth considering:

Virtual team activities, such as video conference training, fitness challenges and more to stay in contact with your teammates, friends and family.

Contact jamie.davidow@aspeninstitute.org with any questions.