



Mandatory Mask Use Policy

Volleyball Alberta has approved the following mask wearing policy “To require masks for all VA Participants, at all times, while they are indoors, including but not limited to arrival, training, game play, and departure.” This policy is for all VA participants during training and competition and **is effective immediately**.

Volleyball Alberta recognizes and understands that we cannot eliminate the risks associated with COVID-19 when participating in our sport. By its very nature, our sport cannot be played without breaching physical distancing measures or sharing equipment.

There have already been documented cases of transmission both within our sport and within our greater sport community. In Alberta, case counts are sharply rising, and we have seen firsthand how quickly community transmission rates may grow. We recently held a COVID Safety, Best Practices & Mask Wearing seminar that we would encourage you to review some of the resources and listen to the recording

<https://www.volleyballalberta.ca/node/881>

Presently, there is strong evidence that mask use is effective at reducing the transmission of COVID-19¹. The research has been slower in relation to the use of masks during activity as, prior to the pandemic, this was not an area that required evaluation. Initial concerns relating to respiratory and cardiac functions waylaid any recommendations for mask use during sport; recent research has now been released that does not substantiate these concerns. The research does demonstrate, while dyspnea (shortness of breath) it is a common response, there are small to limited changes to physiological parameters during exercise.^{2,3,4}

As volleyball is considered a primarily anaerobic sport (athletes use short bursts of energy), there is an opportunity to recover between points. Therefore, it has been deemed safer to wear a mask when compared with an aerobic sport (soccer, cross-country running). Anecdotal feedback from volleyball athletes and coaches who have transitioned to using masks have reported, after an initial adaptation period requiring modifications to training load, the athletes were able to adjust.



Other sport organizations have also incorporated mandatory mask use, here are two examples. The Government of Saskatchewan, "Mandatory, non-medical mask use is required during all indoor sporting activities, with aquatic activities the only exception" . Ontario Volleyball Association (OVA), "In order to minimize potential exposure and spread of COVID-19, the OVA has taken extra precautions and effective immediately, it is mandatory for all participants to wear a face mask at all times for any indoor volleyball activity. This includes athletes while they are on court for training activities and during scrimmages and game play" .

Volleyball Alberta strongly believes we need to take a leadership role in ensuring our members are in the safest environment possible but will continue to monitor the research and adapt accordingly. It is critical for coaches to progressively introduce intensity and physical loads, to give athletes time to adapt to mask wearing. Athletes should be carefully observed and monitored for fatigue or shortness of breath to ensure their safety and wellness.

Mask Selection & Use – Not all masks are the same!

It is important to consider mask selection, fit, cleaning, and use to maximize effectiveness. We encourage people to read the [CBC Marketplace report on Masks](#) when considering what is right for you. Specifically of note: The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said: "Masks with exhalation valves are not recommended, because they don't protect others from COVID-19 and don't limit the spread of the virus." Their advice for finding the right mask includes "Start with something that fits you properly...a mask should fully cover your nose and chin, and be as tight fitting as possible around the rest of your face....look for masks made with multiple layers, and that at least one of them be cotton, preferably the highest thread count you can find." Three layers masks have been recommended by the Canadian Health Minister to maximize protection.

Coaches and athletes are encouraged to bring multiple masks with them to practice or matches, it is **NOT recommended to use damp masks** as this reduces their effectiveness. Participants are asked to change them over the duration of the session to

reduce the potential of accumulating viral particles or germs. Participants must wash or sanitize their hands before and after changing their masks, placing used masks in a separate bag/receptacle.

1. Chu, D.K.; Akl, E.A.; Duda, S.; Solo, K.; Yaacoub, S.; Schünemann, H.J.; COVID-19 Systematic Urgent Review Group Effort (SURGE) Study Authors. Physical Distancing, Face Masks, and Eye Protection to Prevent Person-to-Person Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Lancet* 2020, *395*, 1973–1987.
2. Hopkins, S.R., et al., Facemasks and the Cardiorespiratory Response to Physical Activity in Health and Disease. *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*. 0(ja): p. null
3. Shaw, K.; Butcher, S.; Ko, J.; Zello, G.A.; Chilibeck, P.D. Wearing of Cloth or Disposable Surgical Face Masks has no Effect on Vigorous Exercise Performance in Healthy Individuals. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2020, *17*, 8110.
4. Epstein, D, Korytny, A, Isenberg, Y, et al. Return to training in the COVID-19 era: The physiological effects of face masks during exercise. *Scand. J. Med. Sci. Sports*. 2020; 00: 1– 6.