



## Return to Table Tennis – Club/Training Environment

### COVID-19 Responses & Protocols v.6

This document is intended to outline the basic protocols and procedures which should be adopted by all Clubs, Schools, Branches, National Squads, training groups, staff, volunteers and players to facilitate best practice in reestablishing sporting activity under the auspices of Table Tennis Ireland. Clubs and individuals should remain aware that they may, in general or from time to time, be subject to additional local, travel or jurisdictional restrictions. Members should consult this document in conjunction with any updates which may from time to time be posted on the TTI Website.

This document is intended as a working document to facilitate return to play, in a training or Club environment, for those players, volunteers and staff whose health circumstances and demographic places them at low risk of infection. It should be noted that personal or local circumstances, conditions and facilities, including regarding higher dangers of levels of contagion and transmission, and/or the physical layout of particular premises or facilities, may be such as to indicate a longer suspension of activity for certain localities, groups and individuals, according to those specific circumstances. Individuals, or groups, who consider themselves to be 'at risk' should, regarding the return to activity, make the decision which best suits their circumstances. Individuals must continue to take simple measures to protect themselves, such as staying at home and self isolating when symptomatic; observing good respiratory and hand hygiene; and wearing a face covering in crowded or congregated settings. Those who have not been vaccinated should exercise high levels of caution in higher risk environments.

This document is not intended to cover a return to inter-Club or competitive play, which will be covered in the updated TTI 'Return to Table Tennis – Competition Environment' document, for issue in advance of the resumption of competition. The Association will continue to engage with HSE and Sport Ireland guidelines regarding return to/continuation of play and activity.

***It should be noted that, by its nature, table tennis activity, in normal usage circumstances, promotes and facilitates social distancing, due to the automatic distance from other players which normal playing activity demands. Participants are separated from each other by a minimum 2.74 metre distance, being the length of a table tennis table. Given the personal spacing involved, table tennis is a low risk activity when guidelines are correctly followed. Table tennis is not a contact sport, and does not by default require large group activity.***

This document is intended to clarify and indicate best practice directives, to assist and facilitate proper and safe engagement.

The overriding requirement for all participants in any form of organized or group sporting activity will be on the basis that they meet the following conditions;

- (a) They are not currently diagnosed with COVID 19 **OR** they are fully vaccinated against, or fully recovered from, COVID 19.
- (b) They have not had any contact, in the previous 14 days, with any person diagnosed with COVID 19;
- (c) They have not, in the previous 14 days, travelled outside the country to or from a high risk or high transmission location;
- (d) They are not currently suffering from, or have suffered from in the previous 14 days, any illness or condition (eg fever, coughing, throat ache, muscle ache, breathing problems, loss of sense of taste or smell, other) which is symptomatic of COVID 19, or which may mask the symptoms of COVID 19;
- (e) They are in good health, and they are fit to play;

Participants who do not meet the above conditions should not participate in any group table tennis club or training activity. Participants who feel they may be suffering from any of the symptoms of COVID 19 should immediately seek medical assistance.

Participants, players, coaches and officials should follow suitable hand hygiene, respiratory and distancing protocols.

Further general medical, symptom, contagion and precautionary details regarding COVID-19 are available from the HSE - <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

TTI recognizes the likely impact on the mental wellbeing and anxiety of many members during this continuing period of disruption, and encourage any members who may be suffering in this regard to seek help or referral from, or within, their Club, Squad, family, social circle or healthcare provider, as appropriate.

The display and communication of HSE/COVID-19 guidelines, details and updates, within playing spaces, toilets or common areas of the Club or venue is encouraged.

Further general table tennis details, assistance and information, are available from the TTI Office - [manager@tabletennisireland.ie](mailto:manager@tabletennisireland.ie). The TTI General Manager has been designated as the 'COVID-19 Compliance Officer' for the Association.

Table Tennis Ireland and the TTI Office will disseminate this document to all sub-Committees, Branches, regional Associations, Leagues, Squads, Schools and Clubs, as well as posting to web outlets and social media, and will provide updates and amendments as necessary, similarly disseminated.

Each Branch/Club/venue should have a designated 'COVID-19 Compliance Officer', who will lead action in this area. The Officer may also have existing responsibilities in other areas, as a Coach or on Committee. Responsibility for disseminating and displaying information in an age/ability appropriate and clear manner for all sectors/demographics within their Club/group, including those with disabilities, sits with the designated 'COVID-19 Compliance Officer' appointed by the Branch/Club/venue. In the event of the absence of the designated Officer, the Lead Coach shall act in their place. E-Learning for designated Officers is available at [www.sportireland.ie/covid19/course](http://www.sportireland.ie/covid19/course).

These protocols have, as far as possible, allowed for variation in the types of spaces used for table tennis. Where discrepancies or uncertainties arise, the 'COVID-19 Compliance Officer', their alternate, the Committee, or responsible other party, may, using a common-sense approach, take or apply such decisions, not inconsistent with these protocols, as may best suit the different conditions or environments in which the sport operates within their specific setting.

For the avoidance of conflict or confusion, in the case of multi-sport facilities, or in school or other institutional environments, there may be an overall 'COVID-19' policy or document that may, in some areas or cases (eg facility management requirements) take precedence over these protocols.

In the event it becomes necessary, or at the direction of the HSE and/or Sport Ireland, TTI may at any stage unilaterally withdraw recommendations around sport resumption, and return to a suspension of all official activity, if this is required to protect, or in the best interests of, the membership.

The resumption of limited aspects of table tennis activity is no guarantee of any immediate or short term return to broader aspects of competition or tournament activity.

As the situation around the management of the pandemic evolves, patrons and participants will have varying degrees of immunity/vaccination status, and individual venue/club approaches can reflect that, in line with government guidance.

**All members, players, coaches, committee members and clubs must take responsibility for the implementation of this document within their own environment. Table tennis has been shown throughout the British Isles to be a safe sport, and not an environment that easily lends to or facilitates virus transmission. We can all play a role in maintaining that situation.**

## General Venue Management Guidelines

Before any return to play, and regularly thereafter, the following areas and equipment should receive a deep clean, and on a daily or weekly basis thereafter (depending how often the facility is used);

- All playing surfaces, net posts, table sides;
- All barriers, especially touchpoints;
- All tables, benches, chairs, arm rests;
- All technical equipment touch points, PA, recording equipment;
- All door knobs, handles, push/pull panels/bars, banisters and rails;
- All tap handles, shower switches, cistern flush mechanisms, hand dryer buttons, and equivalent;
- All elevator buttons;
- All light switches;
- Any and all other potential touchpoints

All common usage equipment should be removed, eg ball nets, fitness equipment, or should be incorporated into cleaning protocols.

Cleaning and ventilation of facilities should be conducted in accordance with the most recent Government 'Work Safely Protocol', available from [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie). Where possible, mechanical and natural ventilation measures should be applied and should be considered as part of the venue/hall risk assessment.

## Hall Management Guidelines

It may be necessary to reposition/remove tables within the playing space, in order to maintain social distancing. Specifically, the following guidelines should be applied;

- Tables should be aligned side to side, and not back to back, to ensure players do not back into one another;
- Tables should be spaced minimum 3 metres apart, ie that the nearest point of the longitudinal side of tables to each other should be 3 metres. With the centre line of each table located  $\sim$ .75 metres from each side line, the mid points at the playing end of each table half will then be spaced 4.5 metres apart. A buffer zone of 1 metre between courts is preferable, spacing tables 4 metres apart.
- The capacity of the playing hall will be determined by the number of tables available in accordance with the measurements above. There should be nobody in the playing hall apart from the players on the tables and the coaching staff. Coaching staff numbers should be limited as far as is possible, not more than one coach per 6 players. Groups should not exceed the maximum playing numbers.
- Duration of time spent, and density of persons in specific locations should be minimized, as well as duration of time spent/density of persons in the overall facility.
- Where multiple training groups use the playing space, these groups should not overlap. Players should not train in multiple time slots during the day where different players are taking part in different time slots. Where multiple groups use the playing space, all touch points and playing surfaces will require a disinfectant wipedown between sessions. Sufficient time should be allowed between sessions to facilitate this.
- Changing facilities and toilet capacity will be in accordance with social distancing, and determined by both the capacity of the facilities themselves and by playing hall capacity, whichever is the lesser. Players must maintain social distancing within toilets and changing facilities, which may necessitate area closures and restrictions. Where changing facilities are so limited in size as to be impossible to facilitate social distancing, these facilities should not be used, or should only be used by one person at a time, and/or participants should come to the hall ready to play. Where toilet facilities are similarly restricted, either the facilities should not be used, or users may access the space one person at a time.
- Doors/windows should be left open as appropriate, to maintain air circulation, especially in the absence of air handling systems, while CO2 monitors can be used to monitor air quality levels.
- Access to the playing space should be via an ante-room, changing room, hallway or lobby space, where social distancing can be maintained, wherein all participants will apply hand sanitizer before accessing the hall and equipment.

- Where appropriate, tables can be separated from each other by court barriers, however it should be noted that this will increase the number of possible touch points to be managed.
- All participants should be directed to bring their own water bottles. Communal water fountains or taps should not be used, and ideally should be disconnected. Disposable water bottles should be used, and disposed of each day.
- Doubles practice should not be permitted.
- Transit between hall/toilets/changing facilities/entrances/exits should be managed to avoid large groups moving together, or encountering other large groups en-route.
- Balls should be stored in a receptacle with a water/disinfectant mix, and returned to/retrieved from that point.
- It is recognized that different groups have access to different size and different style facilities (eg a large or small number of entrance/exit points, a large or small number of toilet facilities). The facilities available to the group will dictate the parameters of what activity is possible, and the precise nature of the control measures necessary.
- Where activity takes place in a public or non-exclusive multi-sport environment or facility, specific extra steps may be required to adhere to the hall management guidelines, including, but not limited to, site specific equipment or space management protocols, and/or additional time/space booking slots, to ensure suitable best practice is maintained.
- All halls/venues should complete a risk assessment (sample attached in Appendix 2) in advance of return to play, and thereafter as necessary, as the situation evolves.
- Risk Assessments should, where appropriate, follow the 'DATE' model regarding activity and risk – managing DISTANCE appropriately; managing ACTIVITY appropriately; managing TIME and time limits appropriately; and managing ENVIRONMENT appropriately, specifically regarding training numbers and the size available, including ceiling height as well as floor space.

## Personal Guidelines

- Participants must meet the terms and conditions of play, as previously outlined, and confirm that they;
  - (a) Are not currently diagnosed with COVID 19 **OR** are fully vaccinated against, or fully recovered from, COVID 19.
  - (b) Have not, in the previous 14 days, had any contact with any person diagnosed with COVID 19;
  - (c) Have not, in the previous 14 days, travelled outside the country to or from a high risk or high transmission location;
  - (d) Are not currently suffering from, or have suffered from in the previous 14 days, any illness or condition (fever, coughing, throat ache, muscle ache, breathing problems, loss of sense of taste or smell) which is symptomatic of COVID 19, or which may mask the symptoms of COVID 19;
  - (e) Are in good health, and they are fit to play.
  
- All coaches must keep in regular contact with ALL participants, and must remain aware of the general health and condition of participants.
  
- Coaches must keep a log of all session participants, including other coaches, for use in the event of any future requirement for contact tracing. Logs must be retained in a safe and secure environment in a manner which is GDPR compliant. Self-declaration forms (sample attached in Appendix 1) should be completed as necessary, and likewise stored securely.
  
- All participants must keep coaching staff apprised of any relevant change in their health, or any relevant change of health within their contact or family group.
  
- Responsibility for adhering to good practice for personal protection lies with each person, and includes following appropriate distancing and hand hygiene protocols.
  
- Participants will wash their hands upon arrival in the building and upon departure. Hand sanitizer stations will be available at the entry point and in the training space. Changing facilities can only be used where appropriate social distancing can be maintained. Showering is permitted, in accordance with existing social distancing and touchpoint cleaning protocols, or where cubicles or private rooms are available. Where social distancing and touchpoint cleaning is not possible, shower facilities should not be used, or may only be used one at a time. Use of toilet facilities must also be in accordance with social distancing and touchpoint cleaning protocols. Where social distancing and touchpoint cleaning is not possible, toilet facilities should not be used, or may only be used one at a time. General communal facilities such as kitchens and cafeterias should not be used, unless adequate

social distancing and touchpoint cleaning is possible. In all cases, all spaces used are subject to the same cleaning/distancing requirements as the playing space.

- All warm up and warm down/stretch routines must observe social distancing protocols.
- Participants must sneeze or cough into their elbow, not into their hands or in an unguarded way. Used tissues should be binned or flushed immediately, and hands washed. All participants should have their own hand sanitizer. Spitting on the ground, floor, hands or into bins is prohibited. Spitting should only be done, in a guarded manner, in a sink or toilet.
- Participants should be mindful of an overly accelerated return to activity, which could lead to an increased risk of injury or illness due to an extended period of layoff.
- Participants should clean their bat handle with an anti-bacterial cleaner on at least a daily basis.
- Participants will wash/sanitize their hands every time they leave the playing area, and before returning to the playing area.
- Handshakes, high fives and fist bumps are not allowed.
- Coaches should avoid hands-on contact, and, if necessary, wear appropriate face masks/PPE.
- It is not recommended that Coaches move between playing groups, and where multiple groups are being supervised the Coach should remain separate from the various groups.
- Participants should continue to apply the 'training pod' guidance issued by government, where this remains in place, and which varies according to the number of participants involved and their immunity status. Where multiple 'pods' are active, substantial social distancing between pods should be implemented. The level of 'substantial distancing' will differ depending on the level and intensity of the activity.
- Participants should avoid travelling by public transport to the playing/practice facility, and should avoid carpooling. Where public transport or carpooling is used, participants should be aware of the levels of risk involved in each approach.
- Responsibility for disseminating all relevant information, updates and guidelines lies with the COVID-19 Officer or Lead Coach for each session.



## Suspected Case Response Guidelines

- In the event of a session participant becoming ill in a Club environment, the following steps should be taken;
  - Participant should immediately don a mask;
  - Participant concerned should leave the session and return home, or seek collection from the venue;
  - Where symptoms present as benign or marginal, participant can remain in the venue, isolated from other participants, until collection;
  - Where symptoms present as progressive or serious, normal emergency protocols for an injury or illness should be followed, and the emergency services should be contacted;
  - Responsibility for making a diagnosis of any kind does not lie with the Coach or Club, and normal privacy protocols should be observed.
  
- In the event of a session participant becoming ill outside the Club environment, liaison with family members will be necessary, in order to ensure that list of possible contacts are provided to HSE trace teams, as appropriate. Where appropriate, in cases such as multi-Club squad training, the TTI Office should be informed, who will escalate the matter to the Board and respond as appropriate. The TTI Office will assist with any necessary communications, in a manner consistent with privacy and data protection best practice.
  
- In any situation, all facilities and equipment used by the suspected case should be suitably cleaned in accordance with HSE guidelines.
  
- Additional steps regarding suspension of play, venue activities, or quarantining of members, should be followed in accordance with HSE directives.
  
- As appropriate, venue management/ownership should be suitably advised of any positive diagnosis within their venue.

## **Event Management Guidelines**

- Regional and national tournament, competition and league activity will resume in accordance with the graduated phased return to nationwide activity issued by the HSE and Sport Ireland.
- In all cases, return to competitive activity will be informed both by national and local conditions, as well as by participant profile.
- Due to the continuing evolution of the situation, any necessary protocols regarding tournament and competitive play will be developed by the Association in preparation for the next return to competition.

## Appendix 1 – Self Declaration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name (if other than above): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

This form should be filled out by the player/official/coach, or on their behalf by their parent/guardian.

In accordance with the TTI Return to Play guidelines, I confirm the following;

- (a) I am not currently diagnosed with COVID 19 **OR** I am fully vaccinated against, or fully recovered from, COVID 19.
- (b) I have not, to my knowledge, had any contact, in the previous 14 days, with any person diagnosed with, or awaiting testing for, COVID 19;
- (c) I have not, in the previous 14 days, travelled outside the country to or from a high risk or high transmission location;
- (d) I am not currently undergoing a period of quarantine;
- (e) I am not currently suffering from, or have suffered from in the previous 14 days, any illness or condition (eg fever, coughing, throat ache, muscle ache, breathing problems, loss of sense of taste or smell, other) which is symptomatic of COVID 19, or which may mask the symptoms of COVID 19;
- (f) I am in good health, and I am fit to play.
- (g) I have made myself familiar with, and apply, best practice guidelines and protocols, recommended by the HSE, regarding hygiene and distancing.
- (h) I have been made aware, or made myself aware, of the requirements and protocols in place for this venue regarding the management of COVID-19.

**\*\*Participants who do not meet the above conditions should not participate in any group table tennis club or training activity. Participants who feel they may be suffering from any of the symptoms of COVID 19 should immediately seek medical assistance.\*\***



## Scoring Explainer

Likelihood (0-10) times severity (0-10) = weighted risk.

Maximum weighted risk is therefore 100 (10x10)

Below 20 - low risk

20-40 - moderate risk

40-60 - major risk

Over 60 - extreme risk

### Severity categories

Insignificant

1 or 2

Minor

3 or 4

Moderate

5 or 6

Major

7 or 8

Catastrophic

9 or 10

### Likelihood categories

Rare

1 or 2

Unlikely

3 or 4

Possible

5 or 6

Likely

7 or 8

Almost Certain

9 or 10

