

Special Olympics BC Return to Sport Frequently Asked Questions

The safety of all participants remains our highest priority. We appreciate everyone's diligence in following all safety and hygiene protocols. This is essential to protect everyone.

[SOBC Return to Sport homepage](#) | [Return to Sport news](#)

What is the SOBC Return to Sport Plan?

These are the steps we are taking to bring back in-person sport programs in a careful, safe way. The plan also includes the agreements and steps that all participants will have to follow to be involved in Special Olympics BC programs again.

In summer 2020, we started with pilot programs in a small batch of sports. This piloting tested the overall plan, and the sport-specific safety measures. Then we reopened more sports to more Locals as conditions allowed. In January 2021, working within the updated provincial guidelines, we opened the opportunity for Locals to run small-group adult sport training opportunities that fit within the current provincial restrictions.

What is SOBC's current Return to Sport status?

[Please click here](#) to find the most recent updates.

How much physical distance do I need to maintain?

As of January 2021, provincial guidelines require sport participants to maintain 10 feet (3 metres) of physical distance during sport. [SOBC poster](#)

While you're not doing sport, 6 feet (2 metres) is still appropriate. [BC CDC poster](#) | [Example video](#)

How have you been choosing sports?

While selecting sports, the first thing we looked at was trying to reopen the lowest-risk outdoor sports first. Those were athletics, bocce, golf, and outdoor Club Fit, which are now at Level 1. Now that days are getting shorter and bad weather is coming, we knew we should try to open some indoor sports in safe ways. Please visit the [SOBC Return to Sport homepage](#) to find the currently open sports and what levels they are in.

Through everything, the priority is the safety of participants. SOBC will continue to act based on safety priorities, provincial health circumstances, and the feedback of athletes, coaches, and volunteers.

How do I register for current programs?

Locals are sharing information about their registration for the 2020-21 sport year. All new and returning Special Olympics BC athletes and volunteers are asked to complete the [2020-21 registration form and](#)

[waiver](#) in order to participate in any upcoming SOBC opportunities. We encourage you to sign up for all the sports you usually would.

However, please know that filling out these forms does not automatically mean you'll participate in everything you signed up for. Locals might not be able to offer all sports due to the unique circumstances of this season. During the current sport levels, athletes and coaches can only participate in one sport at a time, in order to be as safe as possible. And numbers in all programs will be small at first, because the space requirements are going to be different in order to ensure physical distancing is possible, and because many facilities will have their own considerations.

But it is still important to fill out your complete registration form with your usual requests. We need to know what athletes and coaches are interested in, so we can make the best possible plans for our community under the circumstances.

Even if you can't participate in all the sports you usually would, there will be lots of other opportunities available while we work on safely reopening in-person programs. There will be virtual sport training programs with athlete and coach interactions, virtual Athlete Leadership programs, health opportunities, and more. Registering will give you access to all of this, and help us keep you up to date on plans.

We are so thankful that you've been so patient and understanding to this point. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to [your community program volunteers](#) and/or the [SOBC Community Development Coordinator for your Region](#).

Can I participate in more than one sport at once?

No, sorry, not at this time. Because the numbers of spaces available in programs will be much more limited than in past, due to safety and physical distancing requirements, athletes and coaches may only participate in one sport at a time in order to make room for the maximum possible number of people to have opportunities to participate.

We all want to create as many opportunities as possible for athletes, but [Dr. Bonnie Henry recently issued a reminder](#) about the importance of participating in just one in-person sport league at a time right now, rather than joining multiple training groups. Every training group you join means you are exposed to a different set of people and environments. SOBC will continue monitoring and following provincial health guidance, and will revisit this question when provincial health conditions allow.

When I end one program and start a new one, do I need to isolate for a week in between?

No. Due to the sizes of SOBC programs and our high level of safety protocols, this step is not required.

Do I need to wear a mask while participating in a program?

Wearing a non-medical, cloth mask, or face covering is required by order of the Provincial Health Officer in indoor public, common, and shared spaces. Program participants in all indoor programs (except swimming), meetings, and events are required to follow these orders. Any participants who

need to apply for an exemption for medical reasons are asked to contact SOBC staff at covid@specialolympics.bc.ca.

[Please click here](#) for a video to help explain how to wear a mask.

Can I organize a carpool or chartered ride to get participants to a program?

If participants travel to the venue as a group in the same vehicle, drivers must follow protocols as set out by WorkSafeBC under the [Taxi, Limo, Chauffer, and Ride Hailing section on the Transportation and COVID-19 Safety webpage](#). This includes, but is not limited to, avoiding physical contact with passengers, ensuring passengers don't sit right next to other passengers, and cleaning handles and seats. Masks must be worn by the driver and passengers while sharing a vehicle to and from SOBC programs.

Are spectators allowed at SOBC practices?

Sorry, no, spectators are not allowed under the safety protocols for the current sport levels. This is in order to reduce everyone's risk, and to make sure we have the biggest possible number of spaces for athletes in programs, while working within facility group size requirements.

The B.C. government has changed phases. Is SOBC changing what level of sport we're in?

Not necessarily. SOBC's progression through sport levels will be determined by provincial staff who will be observing how Locals' programs are going, and monitoring provincial sport and health context.

How will sports progress through levels?

Special Olympics BC staff will review progress based on whether all safety requirements are working and can be fulfilled. When it's time to move to the next level, staff will make a recommendation to the Board of Directors Executive Committee for their review. If approved, staff will announce that decision.

Can I travel outside my community for sports?

Not at this time. Please refer to the Program Progressions chart in the SOBC Return to Sport Plan for more information.

The generic version of my sport is open. Why isn't SOBC offering my sport yet?

Special Olympics is very different than most other sport bodies who are only responsible for one sport. We have 18 sports, Club Fit, youth programs, health screenings, and programs like Athlete Leadership that we must develop plans for. We must make sure our plans are good, and that we do everything we can to protect the health of participants. If we open too many sports at one time, we may not be able to determine early enough what is working and where there are challenges.

There aren't any COVID-19 cases in my community. Why isn't my sport open, or why isn't it transitioning to a more open level?

SOBC must remain mindful of the phase that the province is in, but we also have to avoid moving too quickly to introduce higher-risk activities (such as high-contact sports). We need to be sure before we make a move. However, we recognize that each sport is different and may transition through levels at different times. The SOBC Provincial Office will direct and approve all transitions through levels.

I'm new to Special Olympics! Can I participate?

We would love to get you signed up! Your local program might not be offering all the sports they usually would right away, but please do register so they can take your interests into account while they are planning. To register, please connect with your [Local Committee](#) or the [SOBC Community Development staff member for your Region](#).

I'm really worried about COVID-19, is it going to be safe for me to do my sports?

We have created clear and thorough health and safety steps to make sure all participants will be able to stay healthy. We have a good plan that was created after consulting a lot of different provincial sport and health expert sources, as well as SOBC coaches, athletes, and families. We are all committed to doing everything possible to keep all participants safe. However, if any athlete, coach, or volunteer is not comfortable or ready to return to sport, we fully understand. No one should feel pressured or like they have to return at this time.

I think COVID-19 is overrated, I want to get back to my sports, why is this taking so long?

We have to take COVID-19 seriously. We absolutely must make sure our in-person programs can operate safely. Any setback would be a huge setback. We have to move very carefully through any progressions.

If I individually choose to participate in activities, what can I do to protect myself?

If you don't feel well, are displaying symptoms of COVID-19, you have travelled outside of Canada, or you live in a household with someone who has COVID-19 or is showing symptoms of COVID – you must stay home.

If you are healthy and choose to participate in physical activities outside the home:

- Wash your hands before and after participating.
- Bring your own equipment, water bottle, and hand sanitizer.
- Comply with physical distancing measures at all time.
- Avoid physical contact with others, including shaking hands, high fives, etc.
- Leave the field of play as quickly as possible after you finish.
- Follow the rules and guidelines as set out by the facility and SOBC.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact SOBC staff through covid@specialolympics.bc.ca.