

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 Communicable Disease Prevention Plan?

The Communicable Disease Prevention Plan replaces the previous Return to Sport Plan and protocols.

B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer now recommends having a communicable disease prevention plan and measures instead of the previous COVID-19 safety plans. This means we are trying to help everyone stay safe from all communicable diseases, not just this current pandemic.

The SOBC Return to Sport Communicable Disease Prevention Plan has strong safety protocols to deal with the current concerns around COVID-19, as well as other long-term safety steps.

What is SOBC's current Return to Sport status?

[Please click here](#) to find the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan. Highlights include:

The communicable disease prevention approach currently includes:

- Starting September 13, proof of COVID-19 vaccination for all participants and volunteers ages 12 and up;
- Sport training group sizes maximum 50;
- Continued mask wearing off the fields of play;
- An emphasis on staying home when you are sick;
- Enhanced cleaning, hand washing, and ventilation;
- Maintaining the safety volunteer role for every SOBC program and event;
- And more.

Why is Special Olympics BC requiring all members ages 12 and up to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination at this time?

It's part of a provincial health requirement.

Many facilities that we need for Special Olympics BC programs and events are requiring it.

It's important to make sure we can continue having a safe environment for all participants.

We are committed to keeping our community safe, especially because we know that people with intellectual disabilities are more at risk from COVID-19. (e.g. [Ontario study](#)).

SOBC's strong safety measures are in place with consistency across all Special Olympics BC participants and activities, because we hope to make the requirements as clear and easy as possible for volunteers and for everyone to understand and manage.

The proof of vaccination requirement is necessary right now – not necessarily forever, but for right now – so we can keep safely offering the Special Olympics opportunities that mean so much and are so missed by so many.

Provincial public health officials continue to closely monitor COVID-19 case counts, hospitalizations, and deaths. At this time, they are still seeing a surge in cases primarily in groups of unvaccinated people. The [BC Vaccine Card](#) requirement is in place until January 31, 2022, and could be extended.

How will proof of vaccination work for Special Olympics BC members?

Details are in the [Communicable Disease Prevention Plan](#).

Do I have to be fully vaccinated (2 doses) to participate in Special Olympics BC sport programs?

Yes. SOBC is requiring that members be fully vaccinated (2 doses) before starting a program. This requirement is in place in order to make it as clear and easy as possible for all members and for all volunteers to manage.

If you have had your first dose but have complications about getting your second dose before the start of your program, please raise this with your Local for review.

How do I register for current programs?

All new and returning Special Olympics BC athletes and volunteers are asked to complete the [2021-22 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. Locals are also sharing information about their registration for the 2021-22 sport year.

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.

But it is still important to fill out your complete registration form with your usual requests. Communities need to know what their local athletes and coaches are interested in, so they can make the best possible plans 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?

Yes, athletes and volunteers can participate in more than one SOBC program at a time! However, all Locals will want to make sure that all interested participants – including those on waiting lists – have a spot in a program before giving a participant the chance to be in multiple sports at once.

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

All participants age 12 years and older must wear masks at the following times:

- a. In common areas of indoor facilities when not engaged in physical activity,
- b. During indoor meetings and special events such as registration events or fundraisers, and
- c. Around outdoor sport fields when not engaged in physical activity.

Are spectators allowed at SOBC practices?

Yes. Spectators are allowed at events and practices, while following all of the facility's requirements and vaccination standards. Spectators are encouraged to practice physical distancing when possible.

Can I travel outside my community for sports?

Travel for sport programs and competition within your home Region is permitted.

If you are an athlete who wishes to train outside your home Local, you must complete your 2021-22 request to transfer form and submit it to your Local Coordinator for review by the SOBC Leadership Council.

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 find out what's happening in your community, 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 safe for me to do my sports?

We have safety protocols 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, why do you have so many safety protocols?

We absolutely must make sure our in-person programs and events can operate safely. Many athletes, volunteers, and supporters say they want Special Olympics BC to have the strongest possible safety protocols, in order to feel safe at all our programs and events.

Can I be exempt from the proof of COVID-19 vaccination requirement?

If you have been granted a medical exemption through the provincial medical system, you will need to show proof of that exemption. Please speak to your doctor about this.

Can I participate in virtual SOBC programs or meetings without being vaccinated?

Unvaccinated people are welcome to use the [virtual Special Olympics BC challenge calendars](#) to stay active. If your Local is offering a virtual program, you can seek their approval to be involved. But virtual experiences are not going to be the focus of programming – returning to in-person training and interactions is the priority right now, to provide the highest-quality sport opportunities possible. Locals are not expected to offer virtual programs to accommodate individual needs.

If an unvaccinated Local Committee member wants to continue attending meetings virtually, they can do so at the discretion of their Local Committee and the Local's needs and expectations for the role. Many Local Committees need everyone to be able to interact with fellow members in person to carry out the responsibilities of their role and meet their Local's needs.

What Return to Sport/communicable disease “level” are we in right now?

Now that the [SOBC Communicable Disease Prevention Plan](#) is in place, we don't have Return to Sport levels anymore. The Communicable Disease Prevention Plan will be in place long term, and its safety protocols will govern everything that SOBC does. The protocols are being regularly updated as provincial situations and requirements change, so please consult the [SOBC website](#) to make sure you are using the most current copy of the plan.

The communicable disease outbreak chart in the plan (Appendix B) is not being used right now. It is just in there to show examples of escalation measures that may be taken if we need to respond to a communicable disease. The protocols listed in the plan itself are what must be followed at the given time.

If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact SOBC Vice President, Sport, Lois McNary at lmcnary@specialolympics.bc.ca or 604-616-1341.