



GAA Handball Return to Safe Play

Introduction

Our primary concern is to ensure the safe return of GAA Handball activity in the shortest timeframe possible while ensuring the safety of all our members and the general public. The nature of Handball and the confined space in which it is played mean that additional considerations regarding the risk of play have to be considered.

Handball is viewed as a high-risk sport for the contraction of Covid -19. Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- It is played in a confined space - current evidence suggests that the risk of transmission indoors is nearly 20 times higher than in an outdoor environment.
- As a sport for all ages, we must be mindful of those who might be more vulnerable due to their age
- In competitive play it is impossible to ensure a 2 metre gap remains between players and that no contact is made.

While this document provides a guide for a safe return for GAA Handball activity, it is important to note that further, more detailed, advice and guidance will need to be provided in the coming weeks on specific areas contained within this document including a revised Clár for National competitions in phase 5.

These recommendations on the resumption of activities have been made having studied the best advice available from the Governments and National Health agencies on the island of Ireland, the GAA Covid19 Advisory Group, Sport Ireland and the Federation of Irish Sport.

The resumption of activities must take small and deliberate steps before there can be a return to full activity. The roadmap contained in this document outlines and defines a set of recommended minimum practices for the reintroduction of activities in a methodical manner which preserves player and community safety.

The objective is to advise members and clubs on how a resumption of activities can best be achieved in a controlled and safe manner. The resumption of activity and the timing of progression between the various phases outlined may be influenced by factors outside the control of the Association.

This document should be taken IN ADDITION to any safeguards in place by the club or advice given to you or your family by your doctor or other medical professional. The guidelines, protocols and recommendations within the document are subject to change as a result of changes in Government policy and recommendations. The priority at all times must be to protect the health and welfare of all those involved in GAA Handball and to minimise the risk of transmission within the wider community.

GAA Handball is a community based, and volunteer-led organisation. Participation is voluntary; players, mentors, referees and club officers may choose to opt-in or opt-out from activity at any level at their discretion.

Unless and until a vaccine or antiviral medication is available, there will be a risk associated with COVID-19. Public Health guidelines may prevent the participation of vulnerable groups. We would encourage all others, but particularly those who may consider themselves in a vulnerable category, to seek appropriate contemporary advice and perform a personal risk-benefit analysis before deciding whether to re-engage in their chosen activity.

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1. Staying Safe - 5 Rules to Follow

Safe return to sports is the personal responsibility of each player and coach/parent.

- (1) Wash your hands frequently, regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water (for 20 seconds). Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- (2) Maintain social distancing Observe social distancing guidelines (currently 2m) and keep this distance between yourself and others, especially anyone who is coughing or sneezing. When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including COVID-19 if the person coughing has the disease.
- (3) Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth Hands touch many surfaces and surface to hand transfer can spread the virus. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- (4) Practice respiratory hygiene Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. If using tissues, you should dispose of the used tissue immediately and wash your hands. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from all viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- (5) If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early CALL YOUR GP. DO NOT VISIT THE DOCTOR'S SURGERY OR GAA HANDBALL FACILITY. Stay home if you feel unwell. Follow the directions of your GP and public health service. This will protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

2. Assessing Risk/Vulnerable Groups

Current public health guidelines have identified groups who are vulnerable. An extensive list is contained as part of the more in-depth medical information available on the GAA website at <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/dbrquujnn6bwinpfl1u0.pdf>.

The most common categories are:

- Age over 70 years (even if fit and well)
- Undergoing treatment for cancer
- Chronic lung disease
- Asthma (uncontrolled)
- Diabetes
- Cardiac disease
- High blood pressure
- Obesity Members who have a concern regarding personal higher risk, or a family member / household contact with higher risk, should discuss the situation with their GP (or an appropriate medical professional) before making a decision on whether to return to activity or not.

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3. Health Questionnaire/Temperature Checks

Prior to commencing training, players, parents/guardians and venue officials should complete the self-administered standard risk assessment health questionnaire at <https://returntoplay.gaa.ie>. Symptoms such as a high temperature, fever, cough, sore throat, general weakness, shortness of breath, and change in taste or smell will be identified. The presence of symptoms, or temperature (over 37.5°C) precludes attendance at the venue. In such circumstances, the individual should telephone their GP for advice and management. The Questionnaire will need to be completed once, before the initial Return to Training. It will be the responsibility of the individual to inform the venue's Covid Supervisor of any change in circumstance before subsequent sessions.

These measures will be reviewed in conjunction with national public health advice.

REMEMBER: Positive symptomatology or a high temperature (over 37.5°C) precludes attendance.

In such circumstances, **THE GP SHOULD BE TELEPHONED - DO NOT ATTEND SURGERY OR GAA HANDBALL FACILITIES.**

MORE INDEPTH MEDICAL INFORMATION ON COVID-19 IS AVAILABLE ON THE GAA WEBSITE AT THE

FOLLOWING LINK: <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/dbrquujnn6bwinpfl1u0.pdf>

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4. Preparation of facilities

- **Signage**

Appropriate signage in line with public health guidelines should be placed at the entrance of club facilities, in car parks, at the entrances of toilets and within the alley. These signs should be clearly visible and easy to understand. Signs should emphasize the government recommended social distancing rules (2m at present), hand hygiene, respiratory hygiene, avoidance of personal contact, shaking hands and spitting etc. Resources for Coronavirus posters and signage are available at: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

- **Hand gel dispensers**

Hand dispensers should be provided in the car park, toilets and entrance to alley. Appropriate disposal bins for hazardous biological waste to be available and clearly marked.

- **Toilets**

Toilets must be regarded as potentially contaminated areas. Ventilation is important, doors and windows should remain open in so far as is reasonable and appropriate. Basic hygiene etiquette adapted to the circumstances should be promoted: for example, use of elbows to open doors, and using paper towels to turn taps on and off. On exit of toilet, use hand sanitizer. There should be a regular cleaning programme with daily deep disinfection in place.

- **Alleys**

Keep windows open in order to promote good ventilation where possible. Provide disinfectant wipes outside each court for cleaning of touch points (door handles, walls, visibly moist spots on court floor etc.) After playing, the player who booked the court must clean the court (including wiping door handles, visibly moist spots on the floor and anywhere else touched - on and off court). There should be a regular cleaning programme with daily deep disinfection in place.

- **Medical isolation room**

In the unlikely event that a player becomes unwell during a training session, facilities should be in place for immediate isolation in a designated medical room containing the appropriate personal protective equipment. There will be a clearly defined protocol for linking up with the appropriate medical service - for example, local accident and emergency department (in the event of an injury), general practitioner or out of hours GP service.

5. Scheduling of activities

- Timesheets should be used to clearly show what members are using club facilities at what times. The principle of “get in, train and get out” will apply.
- There should be a time interval between members departing having completed training and the next member arriving.
- Attendance will be limited to essential personnel. Guests, who are not members of the club, are not permitted to access facilities at this time.
- Consider designated times for court access for members who may be identified as at increased risk with respect to COVID -19 infection
- Compliance will be necessary to ensure efficiency and harmony.

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6. Protocol for Participation

Club Members/Executives

- Every club will be required to have at least one Covid19 Supervisor who will be required to complete the Gaelic Games online education module. Only clubs with confirmed Covid19 Supervisors will be allowed to reopen their facilities.
- All members should be provided with this document and familiarize themselves with its contents.

Players / Members

- Members are required to change at home, shower at home and where possible use toilet facilities at home. Strapping should be applied at home.
- Travel to and from training. If possible, walk or cycle to the venue. If travelling by private vehicle, such as a car, only travel with members of the same household. Avoid the use of public transport where possible (if it is the only option follow Government guidelines)
- Do not share equipment, food, drinks, towels, etc.
- All players should use their own individual and clearly labelled water bottles.
- Players should limit post-game social engagement. Keep a 2metre distance from your opponent and other players in the building before, after, and in between games.
- When playing indoors, have one player designated as the “door opener/closer.” That person opens and closes the door between games and during timeouts.
- Leave the court immediately after play is finished and leave the facility immediately after play. On exiting the court, wash and/or sanitize the court, your touchpoints and your gloves and hands and then shower at home.
- No shaking hands, high fives, etc.

7. Clarification

• Outdoor Alleys

Part of GAA grounds – Attached Roadmap applies

Standalone GAA Handball Clubs – Attached Roadmap applies

Community owned facilities – Attached Roadmap applies plus permission needs to be sought from owners of alley.

• Indoor Alleys

Part of GAA grounds – Attached Roadmap applies

Standalone GAA Handball Clubs – Attached Roadmap applies

Community owned facilities – Attached Roadmap applies plus permission needs to be sought from owners of alley

8. Responsibility

It is essential that everyone in the club works together to ensure compliance with these guidelines.

- Each ‘Club Executive’ will be responsible for ensuring that a Covid Supervisor is assigned and will ensure the full cooperation of participating officials, coaches, players and parents.
- Each Covid Supervisor will be responsible for ensuring COVID-19 protocols, including collation of health questionnaires, and cleaning and sanitising of facilities are followed. They will also be responsible for ensuring only necessary personnel are admitted to the venue.
- Each Player/member shall ensure compliance with COVID-19 guidelines within their own area and for health and safety of their colleagues

GAA Handball Return to Safe Play Roadmap

ROI Phase	Phase 1 – 29 th June	Phase 2 – 20 th July	Phase 3 – 10 th August	Phase 4 – 31 st August
NI Phase	Phase 1 – 29 th June	Phase 2 – 7 th August*	Phase 3 – 10 th August	Phase 4 – 31 st August
Outdoor	Outdoor recreational Handball allowed	Outdoor recreational / competitive Handball allowed	Outdoor recreational / competitive Handball allowed	Outdoor recreational / competitive Handball allowed
Indoor	Indoor Facilities closed	Indoor 1v1 Training. Adult: Only two people allowed in the alley at a time. Juvenile: Two players + 1 coach/parent per player at a time. Max 4 people.	Return to competition at Club/County Level in singles format only. Max 2 players, one coach per player and one referee allowed in court. 5 people max. No doubles handball	Return to National Competitions in singles format. No doubles Handball. Reduced grades. Reduced length of games and introduce more frequent time outs.
Facilities	Changing rooms/showers closed.	Changing rooms/showers closed. Viewing galleries closed.	Changing rooms/showers open with recommended social distancing	Viewing galleries open for limited numbers where social distancing is possible.
General	Strict guidelines in place re social distancing and practicing good hygiene. Contact tracing measures in place.	Strict guidelines in place re social distancing and practicing good hygiene. Contact tracing measures in place.	Strict guidelines in place re social distancing and practicing good hygiene. Contact tracing measures in place.	Strict guidelines in place re social distancing and practicing good hygiene. Contact tracing measures in place.

*Based on UK Government guidelines

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9. Useful Links

The following links will provide additional guidance and references for those interested in further information.

- World Health Organisation – WHO <https://www.who.int>
- Health Service Executive - <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Health & Safety Authority - <http://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/>
- NSAI – National Standards Authority of Ireland - <https://www.n sai.ie/covid-19workplaceprotection/>
- UK HSE - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>
- NHS UK - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

COVID -19 Posters and Resources:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>

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Summary

General Conditions of Return to Play all stages

- Continue to adhere to HSE and Government guidance.
- All clubs to have a Covid19 Supervisor in place
- All courts to have a sign in sheet/online system to record who has been in the alley at all times to allow for contact tracing in the event of a potential Covid19 case.
- Mandatory signage in clubs advising best practice in hygiene and social distancing.
- All courts must have hand sanitizer available and players/coaches/spectators must sanitize hands prior to entry.

Guidelines for Players all stages

- Complete Health questionnaire prior to entering facilities
- Change at home, shower at home and where possible use toilet facilities at home. Strapping should be applied at home
- Do not share equipment, food, drinks, towels, etc. Bring personal water bottles.
- When playing indoors, have one player designated as the "door opener/closer." That person opens and closes the door between games and during timeouts.
- No shaking hands, high fives, etc.
- Singles play only.
- Travel separately to the venue where possible.
- Practice social distancing between points and between games.
- Exit the court, wash and/or sanitize the court, touchpoints and your gloves and hands and then shower at home.
- Keep a 2metre distance from your opponent and other players in the building before, after, and in between games. Limit post-game social engagement.

DO NOT play if any of the following apply:

- Currently testing positive for COVID-19 or exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19
- Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Are a vulnerable individual and/or live with someone vulnerable.

APPENDIX 1 – SAMPLE HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE FORM FOR GAELIC GAMES

NAME: _____

CLUB: _____

1. Do you believe that you may currently have COVID-19?

Yes _____

No _____

2. Have you had any of the following symptoms of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?

High temperature (i.e. over 37.5°C) Yes _____ No _____	A new continuous cough Yes _____ No _____
New unexplained shortness of breath Yes _____ No _____	Loss of sense of smell, of taste or distortion of taste Yes _____ No _____

If you have answered **YES** to any of these questions you should stay at home and contact your GP by phone for further advice.

If you have answered **NO** to all of the above questions you may train or play.

Please sign this form to confirm that the details above are true to the best of your knowledge, that you or your guardian have completed the Gaelic Games online Covid-19 Education Module and to confirm that you understand the risks involved in participation, are participating on a voluntary basis and that you may opt-out at any time.

The Questionnaire will need to be completed once before the initial Return to Training. It will be the responsibility of the individual to inform the club's Covid Supervisor of any change in circumstance before subsequent sessions.

SIGNED:* _____

**(For underage players, this document should be signed by a Parent or Guardian)*

DATE: _____

**Your information will be stored securely on the GAA's Games Management System*

Data Protection Notice

Your personal data is being collected on this form in order to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in GAA facilities. Your personal data is being processed in accordance with Article 9(2)(i) of the General Data Protection Regulation, and Section 53 of the Data Protection Act 2018. The information you provide on this form will not be used for any other purpose, and will be strictly confidential. The GAA and your Club are Joint Data Controllers for the information on this form. Your information will be stored securely on the GAA's Games Management System provided by our Data Processor, Dawson Andrews, who we have a contract with to ensure the security of your data. This form will be accessible only by the designated COVID Supervisors in your Club, and designated employees of the GAA. Your personal data will be retained for 3 weeks.

If you have any queries in relation to this, you can contact your Club Secretary, or the GAA's Data Protection Officer by email at dataprotection@gaa.ie, or by phone at (01) 865 8637.

If you wish to raise a concern or report a breach in relation to your personal data, you can do so via the applicable webforms on the Data Protection Commission's website at www.dataprotection.ie.