



# COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM

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**FOR CLUBS**



# COVID-19: GUIDANCE FOR THE NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM

We want to thank you in advance for playing your vital part in helping our great game get going again. By observing Government guidance and the football-specific protocols, let's work together to ensure the transition back to enjoying football is as smooth and safe as possible. Please note that there is no material impact on the playing of National League System football at this time. We will continue to provide updates if required going forward.

This guidance has been updated on **December 17th 2021** to reflect the Government's move to Plan B of the **Covid Autumn/Winter Plan**, in response to the risks of the Omicron variant.

It is important that all participants follow FA and **Government guidance**, including measures on mask wearing and hygiene, to minimise the risk of transmission. The changes to restrictions at this time are summarised below.

- **From Friday 10th December**, face coverings will be legally required in most public indoor venues. All participants must follow the instructions of facility providers on the wearing of face coverings. Face coverings are not required when playing football.
- **From Tuesday 14th December**, fully-vaccinated contacts of someone with Covid-19 should take rapid lateral flow tests every day for seven days. If you test positive or develop symptoms, you need to self-isolate for 10 days.
  - You can find more information on ordering free packs of lateral flow tests [here](#).
  - Government guidance on staying at home for households with possible or confirmed Covid-19 is [here](#).
- **From Wednesday 15th December**, certain businesses and some events are required by law to check the Covid status of workers and customers, using the NHS Covid Pass. This includes unseated indoor events with 500 or more attendees, unseated outdoor events with 4,000 or more attendees and any event with 10,000 or more attendees. To enter or work in these venues and events, customers and workers must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated or have tested negative in the last 48 hours (unless they are exempt from these requirements).
- All international arrivals to take a Day 2 PCR test and self-isolate until they receive a negative test. This means you cannot play football until you receive a negative test or complete your isolation period.

**The FA continues to work closely with Government to monitor the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and will update this document with any further changes, as and when necessary.**

The other FA Covid-19 guidance notes are below, which you'll find [here](#):

- Covid-19: Guidance for Grassroots Football
- Covid-19: Guidance for The Women's Football Pyramid, Tiers 3-6
- Covid-19: First-Aid Guidance for Grassroots Football
- Covid-19: Safeguarding Risk Assessment Guidance

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## DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM FOOTBALL

### ADAPTATIONS TO THE GAME

In previous FA guidance, we set out the required adaptations to the playing of the game, to align to the Government's team sports framework. This included not prolonging elements of the game where players will be in close proximity (i.e. free kicks and corners) and avoiding team huddles and handshakes (for example).

These adaptations are no longer required by the Government and so have been removed from this guidance. However, clubs, leagues and all participants should remain vigilant and, for example, be respectful of individuals/teams who may not wish to shake hands before games.

### CLOSE CONTACT AND SELF-ISOLATION

The Government has updated its guidance on self isolation. Covid-19 infection rates are very high and the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly. It is important that we all take steps to reduce the spread of Covid-19 infection in the community to save lives and protect the NHS.

If you have Covid-19 **symptoms** you should stay at home and self-isolate immediately. You should **arrange to have a PCR test** as soon as possible. If this PCR test result is positive, you must continue to self-isolate.

If you do not have Covid-19 symptoms, but you have a positive PCR test result, you must stay at home and self-isolate.

If you live in the same household as someone with Covid-19 you are at significantly higher risk of becoming infected yourself.

If you have been vaccinated with a Covid-19 vaccine, you are less likely to become severely ill if you catch Covid-19. You are also less likely to spread Covid-19 to other people, but it is still possible for this to happen. Therefore:

- if you are aged 18 years 6 months or over and you are not fully vaccinated\*, and you live in the same household as someone with Covid-19, you are legally required to stay at home and self-isolate

- if you are fully vaccinated or aged under 18 years and 6 months, and you live in the same household as someone with Covid-19, you are not legally required to self-isolate. However, you are strongly advised to take an LFD test every day for seven days, and to self-isolate if any of these test results is positive

\*You are fully vaccinated 14 days after having received two doses of an approved vaccine (such as Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca or Moderna/Spikevax) or one dose of the single-dose Janssen vaccine.

### MASKS AND SOCIAL DISTANCING

From Friday 10th December, face coverings will be legally required in most public indoor venues, unless you are exempt. Please follow the rules laid out by facility providers on face coverings, including when entering, exiting and moving around a facility.

Government advice is that the use of masks reduce risks to people, both yourselves and those around you. Please note you do not need to wear a mask when playing football, including indoors.

### CAPACITY

All businesses and facilities will be able to open, with no caps on capacity (indoors or outdoors).

### QR CODES

While there is no legal requirement for use of QR codes, Government is encouraging businesses and facilities to continue using these.

### CHANGING ROOMS AND TEAM MEETINGS

Changing rooms can be used. However, participants should minimise use of changing facilities where possible to avoid prolonged contact with people in a crowded space.

Clubs and facilities may also wish to consider taking precautions to avoid close contact, for example, asking participants to socially distance, wear masks during team meetings and ensure thorough ventilation.

### SPECTATORS

There are no limits on spectators for indoor or outdoor events. However, please note that venues staging unseated indoor events with 500 or more attendees, unseated

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outdoor events with 4,000 or more attendees and any event with 10,000 or more attendees are mandated to check the Covid pass of spectators.

To enter or work in these venues and events, spectators and workers must provide proof that they are fully vaccinated or have tested negative in the last 48 hours (unless they are exempt from these requirements).

Please also refer to [Government guidance](#) on how to best manage crowds, particularly for bigger events.

## HOSPITALITY

All outdoor and indoor hospitality are allowed to open without restrictions on capacity limits or how people order food and drink, however guidance on face coverings and hygiene should be followed.

## KEEPING YOUR CLUBHOUSE AND EQUIPMENT CLEAN

Keeping your clubhouse clean will reduce the risk of passing the infection onto other people. To achieve this, your cleaning procedures should be thorough and rigorous. A cleaning schedule could include:

- Daily cleaning throughout the clubhouse and facility;
- Identifying high-contact touch points for more regular cleaning (e.g. door handles, grab rails, vending machines);
- Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between use;
- Cleaning of shared training equipment after each individual use;
- Having waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection;
- Removing any non-essential items that may be difficult to clean.

The FA is working with its recently-appointed official hygiene partner, Dettol, to the grassroots game.

## LATERAL FLOW TESTS

From Tuesday 14th December, fully-vaccinated contacts of someone with Covid-19 should take rapid lateral flow tests every day for seven days. If you test positive or develop symptoms, you need to self-isolate for 10 days.

- You can find more information on ordering free packs of lateral flow tests [here](#).
- Government guidance on staying at home for households with possible or confirmed Covid-19 is [here](#).

## FIRST AID

All participants should ensure they have read the updated FA guidance on First Aid.

## TRAVEL

All participants may travel to games with no restrictions in place for domestic travel. Participants should be aware that travelling in cars is now permitted, however this does mean that they will likely be in close contact and should manage any risks linked to this. Any international travel should be in line with [Government advice](#). Players and clubs should consider how they can reduce the likelihood of close contact occurring.

## INSPECTING THE EXISTING CONDITION OF YOUR FACILITY

If parts of your facility have not been used for some time, a thorough building inspection and walk-round will allow you to identify any issues and damage. This will help you plan what work needs to be carried out and should include water quality (e.g. for Legionella and other contaminants), drains, gas services, ventilation, alarms/safety systems and pest control.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The guidance you are reading is FOR ALL – players, coaches, club officials, club welfare officers, match officials, league officials, first-aiders, volunteers, parents/carers, facility providers and spectators.

Clubs and facility providers should update their risk assessment regularly and also update their medical emergency action plan around player care, as well as strictly following the first-aid guidance document published by The FA, without exception. This is both to protect players and any club member who is trying to aid the player if an emergency arises.

**Whenever this document refers to finding further information on TheFA.com, you'll find it [here](#).**

**DISCLAIMER:**

This guidance is for general information only and does not constitute legal advice, nor it is a replacement for such, nor does it replace any Government or UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) advice; nor does it provide any specific commentary or advice on health-related issues. Affected organisations should therefore ensure that they seek independent advice from medical practitioners, or healthcare providers, prior to implementing any re-opening plan, as required. Independent legal advice should be sought, as required and depending on your, or relevant circumstances.

While efforts have been taken to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of publication, the reader is reminded to check the Government website to obtain the most up-to-date information regarding social distancing and any other Government measures.



**FOR ALL**

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