



NEWS RELEASE



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NHL, NHLPA ENHANCE COVID PROTOCOLS WITH ADDITION OF SEVERAL NEW MEASURES

NEW YORK/TORONTO (Feb. 11, 2021) – The National Hockey League Players' Association (NHLPA) and the National Hockey League (NHL) announced today the addition of several new safety measures to their Protocols to reduce the incidence of COVID-19 cases and to increase the ability to detect cases of COVID-19. These strategies have been tested and validated in medical settings and all measures have been endorsed by the NHL's and NHLPA's medical advisors. These enhanced measures will be in effect at least until Feb. 28; and the NHL, NHLPA and their respective medical groups will be regularly monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of these measures, in addition to continuing to consider further enhancements to the Protocols.

Addition of POC Testing for U.S.-Based Clubs: In addition to daily, lab-based PCR testing, the League is in the process of providing each U.S. Club with point of care (POC) rapid testing to be administered on game days to all Players and Club personnel (as well as on-ice officials) who work in or around the bench area during games. It is expected that this testing will be in place as early as today for most markets. Although these tests have a slightly lower ability to detect the presence of COVID-19 than lab-based PCR testing, they will provide prompt, same-day results that will reduce the chance of game participation by individuals who might have active infection. If a "testee" tests positive, such individual will be immediately isolated as per the Positive Test Protocol and contact tracing will promptly ensue. The individual will not participate in the game that day.

The League is currently working directly with the seven Canadian Clubs on the availability of similar or supplemental testing resources.

Work/Home Quarantine: To reduce the introduction of infection into the team environment, effective immediately, all Players, Coaches, Training Staff, Equipment Staff and other members of each Club's Travelling Party will be required to remain at home and not leave their place of residence except to attend practices and games, to exercise outdoors on an individual basis, to perform essential activities (e.g., go to the doctor), or to deal with family or other emergencies and other extraordinary circumstances. While Players on many Clubs are already following this approach, it is our hope that requiring this measure across the League will reduce risks from community-based exposures. It is also being strongly recommended that household members (spouses, partners, etc.) limit their discretionary activities outside of the home. Food and grocery delivery services are being recommended to eliminate the need to shop in person, and to thereby reduce interactions with the community. We understand that not all public social interactions can be avoided, such as school-aged children attending school. Other discretionary activities by household members, such as social engagements, however, are to be limited as much as possible.

Reinforcement of Preventative Measures: The NHLPA and NHL will ensure that their personnel continue taking an active role in Player education of preventative measures with emphasis placed on Players wearing masks at all times when not actively exercising, as well as adherence to distancing requirements.

Facial Coverings: To reduce the transmission of infection, it is being strongly recommended that teams source and provide all Group 1 and 2 individuals with KN95 facemasks. Once sufficient quantities can be sourced, Group 1 and 2A individuals will be required to wear KN95 facemasks at all times that facemasks are otherwise required to be worn pursuant to the COVID-19 Protocols. Masks have been shown to be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19 and, as such, the COVID-19 Protocol requires that facemasks be worn at all times when not exercising, including when Players are in the locker room.

The fact that masks cannot be worn by Players on the bench does not mean that they should not be worn in the dressing room. The goal of masking is to reduce total exposure. Therefore, any additional time during which face coverings can be used will help reduce risk of disease transmission. Situations such as sitting in the dressing room together pre-game, between periods, and post-game unmasked are more likely to lead to the spread of COVID-19, or possible exposure. Players have been instructed that the use of face masks in the dressing room is therefore important.

Early Detection in Household Members: The NHL and NHLPA are encouraging Clubs to provide more direct education to, and access to regular testing of, family or household members. The goal of this measure is to identify potential sources of Player infection before transmission can occur.

Reduced Interaction: Members of each Club's Travelling Party are being asked to reduce the amount of time spent in direct interaction with one another, including:

Team Meetings: All team and other meetings will now be required to be conducted virtually, including all coaching meetings and video review sessions. Many Clubs have already transitioned to this model as a matter of standard operating procedure. Given the importance of this intervention, exceptions will not be granted barring extenuating circumstances.

Social Settings: Clubs and Players are being advised that no extended time should be spent sitting together unless all participants are both sufficiently distanced and masked. Additionally, Player lounges in Club hotels are required to be closed no later than midnight.

Players with Recent Previous Positives – Revised Seating Assignments: Evidence is emerging that individuals appear to have at least some protective immunity to re-contracting the COVID-19 virus for at least 90 days after their initial infection. By reconfiguring the normal seating arrangements in locker rooms, during team travel, or at meals so that previously infected Players are seated next to individuals who never contracted the virus, the Players with presumptive immunity can be used as a "buffer" for the Players and staff who are unlikely to have such immunity. For example, a Player who tested positive less than 90 days previously should be seated next to a Player who has never had COVID-19, or who has recovered from COVID-19 more than 90 days previously. The League is recommending that this measure should be applied not only to Players, but equally to Coaches and other Club staff as well.

Measures to Improve the Playing Environment

Ventilation on the Bench and in the Penalty Box: In addition to the removal of the plexiglass shielding behind the Player benches, we also have mandated the removal of the shielding from the back of the penalty box area. This will allow increased air flow away from the penalty box area. To facilitate determinations regarding the puck going out of play and to add a safety barrier between any spectators and the Players, each Club/arena is being required to install a mesh or netting barrier behind the Player benches and penalty box areas where the plexiglass shielding previously existed. Prior to such installation, spectators will not be permitted to sit in the section behind the Player benches and/or penalty box.

In addition, Club/arenas that wish to utilize the sections behind the benches and penalty box for spectator seating will be required to: (1) erect a plexiglass or acrylic barrier in the seating section immediately in front of where spectators will be sitting, which must be at least 25 feet back from the back of the player bench and penalty box areas and no lower than the top of the player vomitories; and (2) install a seat tarp and station security personnel directly behind the penalty box area and in front of the spectators.

Transmission Investigation and Quarantine: A pilot project utilizing data from the Player Tracking System has been launched in order to more objectively measure the manner and degree of interaction between Players, and as an enhancement to the contact tracing process. The goal of this project is to more precisely determine which people should be considered for enhanced monitoring and/or quarantine based on close contact with potentially infected Players.

Genomic Sequencing: On a case-by-case basis, and as a response to clustered positives, positive test samples will be analyzed with whole genomic sequencing to determine specific strain types and to estimate pathways of transmission between Players and other members of the Club Travelling Party.

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