



Message from the President of BC Water Polo Association

Re-Opening Water Polo in BC



Dear Water Polo Parents, Coaches, Athletes,

BC is in the second and soon third stage of getting back to life from Covid 19, which may or may not ever return to the “normal” that we have known before this crisis. As a water polo community, we will do our best to carefully follow the guidelines set out by our province, local government, and department of Parks and Recreation.

Each club is in a different situation, depending on their facilities opening or not, whether they have access to outdoor aquatic facilities, or other outdoor opportunities. In general, we are fortunate in this province, given the large number of outdoor spaces, lending themselves to areas where we can spread out small groups safely.

It is without question, that we need to get children back into regular social activities, and regular exercise, regular face to face contact with their friends and coaches. BC Water Polo will be looking at ways to contribute to getting water polo activities back to normal, while strictly observing provincial guidelines with respect to travel, physical distancing, and any other measures. We will be monitoring what is allowed for us and what is not on an ongoing basis, and “interpret” the results for our water polo players, teams and coaches to the best of our ability and with the intent to help and empower.

Presently, as your provincial representatives we are working on a provincially mandated roll out plan which will be submitted to Via Sport and our Provincial Government for review to ensure our sport and organization meet all the requirements for opening. This plan will then be voted on by the Board and put into action in concert with local municipalities.

Here is what we have learned:

- Maintaining physical distancing is challenging. The reasonable expectation is that physical distance will be maintained wherever and whenever possible. Hugs, handshakes, exercises that require proximity should be avoided, as well as exercises requiring close physical contact.
- Athletes can be spread out as much as possible during aquatic and dryland practices.
- Practices can be divided into smaller age and gender specific groups, and drop off and pick up time can be staggered to reduce large numbers in fields or pools at any one time.
- Parents should reduce social contact with other parents and confine their practice attendance to drop off and pick up.
- Kids should come to practice ready to go, eliminating the need to use change rooms.
- One at a time in washrooms should be encouraged.
- Food and practices should be separated. Shorter practices, with children eating their meals at home preceded by careful handwashing is an easy to implement measure.

Here is an excerpt from the most recent **Royal Lifesaving Society – BC and Yukon Branch – Guidelines for Reopening BC Pools and Waterfronts:**

Aquatic Sports

1. Offer organized aquatic sports only while there is no ongoing community spread of COVID-19 in your region in accordance with provincial/territorial health authority recommendations.
2. Offer organized aquatic events (such as competitions) only after provincial/territorial health authority approval has been granted.
3. Younger athletes that need physical manipulation and close proximity to others should not resume training before provincial/territorial health authority approval has been granted (corresponding with the start of swimming lessons and following the same recommendations).
4. Masters athletes or athletes at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 (see admission guidelines) should not resume training before provincial/territorial health authority approval has been granted.
5. Head trainers must present a plan to the operator for the organization of training in order to respect the basic principles of COVID-19 precautions. The plan should establish guidelines for the spatial, temporal and physical organization of a swimming pool, making it possible to comply with the rules of physical distancing while presenting an overall vision of the development and movement of individuals.
6. Follow respective sport federation or organization recommendations.
7. All aquatic sports:
 - a. Organize local training only (athletes should not come from another region/province to practice their sport).
 - b. Parents should not attend training sessions (if possible, the athlete should go to the aquatic facility on their own or the parent should stay in their vehicle).
 - c. Put measures in place that prevent the instructor or coach to be alone with an athlete.
 - d. Keep the same group of athletes for each training session.
 - e. Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres between each athlete.
 - f. Encourage solo skill training rather than group events.
 - g. Do not hold dry land training by the pool.
 - h. Athletes should not leave equipment or sport bags at the facility.
 - i. Athletes are encouraged to act responsibly and promote appropriate behaviour on social media with their peers.

BC Water Polo is here to support you in the valuable endeavour of getting kids back to the exciting sport of water polo.

Yours in Sport,
Vincent O Hanley
President, BC Water Polo Association