

Frequently Asked Questions on COVID-19

On the 11th June 2020 The Department of Sport issued directives on what they have determined to be acceptable health and safety protocols that need to be in place at any venue where sport is to be practiced or played under the control measures put in place to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Bowls South Africa (BSA) submitted a risk management proposal to the Department of Sport, Art and Culture (DSAC) which is based on those health and safety protocols as issued by that Department.

Subsequent to this document being made available to all members there have been numerous requests for clarity on some of the matters contained therein. To this end we are publishing this document which will contain common questions that have been asked and some guidance on other issues around COVID-19 hopefully these will provide some clarity so that members have a clear and common reference point.

In order to understand why the health and safety protocols as required of us, and indeed all businesses, are so important we would like to bring the following forward for information purposes:

ABOUT THE VIRUS

On 7 January 2020, severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative agent of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The virus is characterised by a fatty layer on the outside and the use of soap and household disinfectants has the ability to break down this fatty layer.

Current evidence indicates that COVID-19 is primarily transmitted through close contact with respiratory droplets which occur as a consequence of coughing or sneezing. Further transmission can take place as a consequence of droplets landing on objects and surfaces and then through contact with such objects or surfaces.

With regard to surfaces there is apparently no empirical proof that anyone has contacted the virus from packaging but this possibility cannot be overlooked. Surfaces and objects that are more frequently handled pose, potentially, a greater risk. Similarly it is believed that food does not transmit the virus because the virus primarily affects the respiratory organs. In a recently published study of the ability of the virus to survive on different types of packaging it was established that under controlled conditions the virus survived up to four hours on copper, up to twenty-four hours on cardboard and up to three days on plastic and stainless steel. The study also found that if the humidity in the air is less than forty percent the virus will not survive as long. What is important to understand is that the virus cannot expand outside of itself on different surfaces so over time and of course assuming no further infection by outside agencies whatever the number of viruses present on any surface will either decrease or remain the same.

Currently there is no substantive proof as to how the virus fares under different climatic conditions. Based on studies done on similar virus's refrigeration and freezing could prolong their active cycle. Additionally the virus apparently does not do well under high temperatures of roughly 30 degrees Celsius and above. This does not mean one can relax when you are exposed to higher temperatures vigilance and protective behaviour should always be practiced.

WITH THE ABOVE IN MIND WHAT SHOULD WE BE MINDFUL OF TO MAXIMISE PERSONAL PROTECTION

1. What are the correct social distancing requirements?

According to the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) and as accepted by the government the minimum acceptable distance between two persons is six feet which has been accepted as two meters. This is best practically demonstrated by each person extending their arms horizontally to shoulder height so that the ends of their hands barely touch each other.

2. What sorts of face masks are acceptable?

The minimum requirement of any face mask is that it must cover both the mouth and nose.

As a minimum the CDC suggests using two layers of tightly woven 100 percent cotton fabric such as quilter's material or bedsheets with a high thread count folded in multiple layers.

Thicker, high-grade cotton masks are usually better at filtering small particles. However, stay away from materials that are too thick.

Full face plastic shields are also considered as acceptable for protection.

Some hints on the use of masks:

- Before putting on a mask, clean your hands well with soap and water or hand sanitiser.
- Cover the mouth and nose with your mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
- Avoid touching the mask while using it and, if you do, wash your hands.
- Replace the mask when it is damp.
- To remove your mask, take it off using the elastic tags, without touching the front and discard immediately into a closed bin or, if the mask is reusable, directly into the washing machine

Face masks are not a guarantee that you won't come into contact with COVID-19 droplets but it does certainly help minimise the risk. This is even more applicable in an environment where everyone is wearing a face mask.

3. Will the use of gloves help?

Research show that gloves offer a "false sense of security". Gloves are simply an extension of your hand and you will touch surfaces and then touch other objects in the same way as you would with your bare hand and hence should you be touching an infected surface the ability to transfer this is the same whether you use your bare hands or a gloved hand.

4. What can I do to protect myself and prevent the spread of disease?

As discussed above the main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing or sneezing.

The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, which is available on the websites and social media of the national Department of Health (www.health.gov.za), National Institute for Communicable Diseases. BSA website also has a dedicated link allowing you to access all this information.

Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water or clean your hands with an alcohol based hand sanitiser. Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitiser kills viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain social distance of at least one meter distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing ideally walk away and avoid such contact. When someone coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain a virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease. Bear in mind that people that who do not necessarily display symptoms associated with COVID-19 may be asymptomatic and quite capable of transmitting the virus.
- Avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.

- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. 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.
- 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. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately. Droplets spread viruses. By following good respiratory hygiene you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.

Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health facility. The national and provincial Departments of Health will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your healthcare provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.

5. What are the symptoms associated with COVID-19?

Most common symptoms:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness

Less common symptoms:

- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- A rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Loss of speech or movement

Please seek immediate medical attention if you have serious symptoms. Always call before visiting your doctor or health facility.

People with mild symptoms who are otherwise healthy should manage their symptoms at home. On average it takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days.

6. What is considered a sign of a fever?

The normal human body temperature remains around 36.5°C to 37°C, regardless of the external temperature or weather.

An adult is typically considered feverish if their measured temperature is above 37.8°C.

7. What is screening?

Screening is a way to do a quick assessment if you may exhibit symptoms that could indicate whether you have COVID-19 or not. The designated person will scan your forehead to take your temperature.

When booking you may be asked the following questions which you must answer honestly

- Have travelled to a high risk country in the last 14 days?
- Have had contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 14 days?
- Do you have symptoms such as fever, cough and difficulty in breathing?

8. What are comorbidities?

Comorbidity and comorbid conditions refer to one or more diseases, or conditions, that occur along with another condition in the same person at the same time. Examples of this are:

- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes including type 1 or type 2
- Cardiovascular disease including hypertension.
- Severe obesity
- Chronic lung disease

9. What do I do if I am tested positive for COVID-19

Individually

- The institution responsible for your test is required to advise the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) of this fact.
- You may also elect to contact the NICD helpline (details of this is available on the BSA website) with this information.
- Immediately upon hearing this result you should take steps to self-isolate (protocols on this can be accessed from the BSA website)
- You should also immediately contact the club management advising them of this.
- Staff from the NICD will contact you asking you to provide them with details of your movements over the last two days and people you may have come into contact with.
- Your period of self-isolation will be confirmed and during this period no contact with third parties should take place.

Clubs

- Immediately on receipt of this information clubs must close access to the premises.
- Attendance lists for the days concerned must be made available to the authorities.
- Contact all persons who were there on the days concerned and advise them of that they could potentially have been exposed to COVID-19 and to expect contact from the authorities which could result in them being requested to self-isolate.
- Undertake an intensive deep cleaning process before activities can resume. It is strongly recommended that a reputable company experienced in this process be engaged to undertake this process as they will be able to supply you with a certificate of compliance.

WITH REGARD TO RETURNING TO PLAY

1. When can we reopen?

Two criteria must be satisfied before clubs can open:

- The Minister of Sport, Art and Culture will review our application and in conjunction with other authorities will make a determination as to when bowls is allowed to resume. As soon as this authority is given to BSA this will be communicated to all members and
- Clubs are required to complete a Certificate of Compliance and lodge this with their controlling District. Once the District is satisfied as to the completeness of this document they will allow the club to open.

Bottom line is that we must first wait for permission from the Minister of Sport, Art and Culture even if we have a Certificate of Compliance in place but both requirements must be collectively satisfied.

2. What do we do once we have completed our compliance certificate?

- The completed compliance certificate must be sent to your district office.
- It must also be downloaded onto the BSA database.

3. What format of play can we use?

BSA has sought permission for the following formats to be used according to the level of restrictions in place at the time:

- Level 3 – Singles and pairs allowed
- Level 2 – Singles, pairs and trips allowed
- Level 1 – All formats permitted

It must be remembered that these are the conditions that BSA applied to the government for consideration. Should government decide otherwise these conditions will be changed to meet their requirements.

4. What is the minimum acceptable distance between rinks on a green?

Greens in South Africa vary in dimension from 35 sq.mts. up to 40 sq.mts and the width of rinks can vary between 4.3 and 5.8 meters. In terms of protocols submitted a **minimum distance of two meters** must be available on either side of the rink being used. As there will be no other persons present when practicing takes place the area immediately to the left or right of the end rink may be considered as part of the two meter area provided this distance is available.

5. Can we play tabs-in or competitions?

The dispensation granted by the government under level 3 restrictions allows for non-contact sport bodies to practice only. Thus any form of organised participation where play is organised in such a way as to be deemed to be of a competitive nature is not allowed. Our representation to the government was based on the principle that no tabs will be handled. As and when the government relaxes these conditions members will be advised accordingly.

6. Do we have to use the booking system developed by Bowls SA?

Firstly we need to understand why there is a booking system in place and the reason for that is twofold:

- No person should be able to arrive at the club and simply go to the green and play without having booked a time. The reason being is that we do not want to create a scenario where people gather without purpose.
- The booking sheet will serve as a record as to who exactly has used the facility on a particular day. This will provide the authorities with the necessary tracking base with which to identify people who may have had contact with any person who has COVID-19 symptoms and has been at the club.

The authorities have made it very clear that they will be sending duly authorised people to visit sports venues and you can rest assured that one of the first things they will ask for is sight of the register of attendees.

Each club is responsible for ensuring compliance with this and are encouraged as far as practically possible to facilitate this process as remotely as possible.

7. What are the minimum details that must be recorded on the daily booking sheet?

As per our submission to the government the following details must be available:

- Full names
- Phone contact number
- Email address if you have one
- Residential address
- Alternate contact person
- Confirmation that you do not display symptoms associated with the COVID-19 virus

- Name of Club and
- Date

Should you avail yourself of the BSA booking system the above details are recorded in the database and it will suffice to enter your BSA number.

8. Will the club provide water or any refreshments?

Each person having booked to play will be responsible for providing their own refreshments. No water dispensers will be provided by the club under any conditions and no refreshments can be purchased from the club until this restriction is lifted. Players may not under any circumstances share any of their refreshments with any other person.

9. Can I give or receive coaching?

Coaching on a one on one basis will be allowed provide the proper social distancing protocols are in place. The limits on numbers will be adjusted according to the regulations in place from time to time.

10. What can I use to mark touchers?

The provisions applied to government for this is that only spray may be used. BSA understands there may be a shortage of spray in South Africa and will advise alternative measures when this becomes necessary and only upon approval from the DSAC.

11. Can I remove 'dead' bowls from the rink?

'Dead' bowls can be removed and should be set to one side so that when next used they can be subject to sanitation.

12. Can visitors use my clubs facility?

Visitors may use your clubs facility provided that the club management has allowed for this and that they have booked the use of a rink in the same manner as club members have done.

Under no circumstances may people simply walk in to the club and seek to play immediately.

13. Can people over the age of sixty practice?

BSA is fully aware of the age demographics of our sport and any age restriction placed on our sport will be to the detriment to the vast majority of our members. With this in mind in our representation to the government we did not mention any age criteria and await their response and until such time that they specifically make restrictions on an age basis we will allow all members to practice irrespective of their age.

It is well documented that people of a certain age group and those with one or more comorbidity are the most vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus and our plea to each and every one is to take your personal circumstances into account before you venture out into an environment that could be to detriment of your own health.

14. Can we stay behind after our practices session is finished?

The whole intention of the dispensation to allow us to practice is for members to use the facility and then leave the premises. People are requested not to loiter afterwards for a friendly chat.

15. Can I bring a friend or family member with me to watch?

You are not allowed to have anyone accompany you to the venue. As part of the clubs compliance protocols all benches are to be removed.

16. When will the club be allowed to sell refreshments or alcohol?

Under current legislation this is strictly not allowed and as soon as the relevant permission is granted clubs will be advised. Clubs are urged to ensure that this requirement is adhered to.

17. Can we use the club ablution facilities?

The clubs ablution facilities may be used. Guidance as provided by your club on health and safety protocols around this issue must be used at all times.

18. Can we use the locker or change room facilities?

These facilities are out of use until such time as the regulations published by the government provide for this. At such time BSA will advise its membership accordingly. All indoor facilities should be closed to access from any person.

19. Can we share equipment?

No equipment of any nature can be shared between any persons. It is the prerogative of each club to make a determination on club owned equipment and this should only be done once proper sanitation of such equipment has been undertaken.

20. What is the minimum requirement for sanitisers?

According to government guidelines only sanitising agents that contain a minimum of Seventy percent (70%) alcohol are acceptable and must meet the standard prescribed by the Department of Health?

21. How many people are allowed at the club at any one time?

The first matter to consider is the restriction placed by the government in terms of gatherings and to be guided by this. Depending on the number of greens you have and the number allowed as above each club will have to make its own determination. Clearly in the case of a one green club the number allowed will be substantially less than those clubs with multiple greens. Remember at all times the intention is not to provide for a gathering of members but to facilitate practice.

22. Is it safe to touch things such as taps, handrails, doors etc.?

It is the responsibility of each club to ensure that all contact points are regularly sanitised.

It has been determined that under controlled conditions the virus survived up to four hours on copper, up to 24 hours on cardboard and up to three days on plastic and stainless steel.

The virus however cannot thrive on different surfaces. Viruses in general cannot multiply outside of their host.

23. What are the health and safety protocols around playing equipment such as jacks and mats?

Each club has been issued with the protocols with regard to handling and sanitising these items and part of this will require active participation by persons using the facilities. In short under current conditions the jack will not be delivered but placed by foot by the person on the opposite side of the green. The jack must be regularly sanitised during the practice session. Likewise mats are to be cleaned with a soft wipe before the start of each end and at the end of the session all the mats must be properly sanitised. Members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the protocols.

24. What are acceptable sterilisation agents?

Diluted household bleach solutions that are available at supermarkets are suitable for use as sterilisation agent. As most of these are primarily chlorine based they should only be used if appropriate for the surface. Take note of the following when using bleach:

- Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date.
- To make a bleach solution use as per instructions but generally 150ml of concentration should be diluted with 1000ml of water. Please note these are guidelines and each batch prepared should be done in terms of the guidelines given by the manufacturer.
- Make dilute bleach solution as needed and use it within 24 hours, as its disinfecting ability fades with time.
- Non-porous items like jacks can be immersed in bleach for 30 seconds.

- Roughly one minute exposure time is needed to sterilise and kill the virus. It is also recommended that cold or tepid water is used to mix the solution as chlorine can lose its effectiveness if exposed to high temperatures.

Some examples of bleach are:

- Jik
- Clean day and
- Clorox

Alcohol in many forms, including rubbing alcohol and commercially alcohol based sanitisers can be effective for killing many pathogens.

Hydrogen peroxide is typically sold in concentrations of about 3%. It can be used as is, or diluted to 0.5% concentration for effective use against coronaviruses on surfaces. It should be left on surfaces for one minute before wiping.

It must be understood that there is a basic difference between chlorine and bleach in that chlorine is a natural element, while bleach is a solution of many elements normally including chlorine.

25. Do sterilisation agents pose a risk to the surfaces of the green?

Sterilisation agents that are chlorine based should not be used on the greens. When sanitizing mats, jacks etc. this must be done well away from the playing surface.

Players who in the process of sanitizing equipment expose their hands to the liquid should clean their hands with water before returning to the playing surface.

Good practice would be to provide a bucket or similar object for sterilisation purposes together with a bucket containing water so that players can rinse their hands after using the sterilisation agent.

An alternative would be to place a plastic sheet on the area not being used on the green.

Whatever process you implement please be careful that the greens are not affected by spill.

26. Has BSA developed a poster for use at the clubs?

A poster has been developed and is available for clubs to download and print according the quantities that each club may require.

In our presentation to the Minister one of the areas we agreed to implement was having posters available. The bottom line is that either those posters as prepared by BSA or those prepared by the club must be put up in prominent places throughout the club.

In preparing this document it has been done with the intention to provide a guideline to clubs and members on the proper safety and health protocols that need to be in place so that the commitment we made in our representation to the government are properly implemented.

BSA recognises that there is big diversity in the size of the clubs and that it is not possible to operate on the premise of 'one size fits all' policy. Every club is different and will have its own rules on participation by members and visitors and how it best caters for these within the prescribed parameters. Clubs are reminded to ensure that any activity by visitors must be consistent with the behaviour put in place for its own members. The main point that we achieve is consistency in terms of application of the protocols that formed the basis of our agreement with DCAS.

The physical wellbeing of our bowls members is of paramount importance. The documentation submitted to the Department of Sport, Art and Culture, and subject to our attempted clarity set out herein, has its foundation on well researched local and international best practice health and safety protocols that are needed to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. As much as it our responsibility to provide effective protocols the ultimate responsibility for adherence to these lies with each and every person who is allowed access to our clubs. It must be remembered that not only is the responsibility for looking after your own health your own responsibility but equally we owe to all those we may come into contact with to protect their wellbeing during their interaction with us as well.

Should any member require any further clarity or wish to add to this document please feel free to contact your district office who can then direct such queries to us. Furthermore if anyone believes we have not covered a topic either in whole or inadequately please do likewise as above.

This document will reside on the BSA website (www.bowlssa.co.za) together with other documentation as issued from time to time and will be subject to update as is needed. Further information on COVID-19 issues can be obtained through access to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (www.nicd.ac.za). The BSA website also has a portal that will allow you to access the government's online COVID-19 online resource and news portal.