



**FENCING**  
I R E L A N D

# **Covid-19**

## **Return to Fencing Guidelines**

### **Indoor training**

#### Information for Clubs

#### September 2021

Indoor fencing training is returning with new measures which are **scheduled to come into effect from 20 September 2021**.

This will not be a complete removal of restrictions, some limitations will remain for a period. The government has scheduled the removal of these final limitations on 22 October 2021.

**From 20 September, two ways of organising training will be allowed:**

1. With capacity limits of 100 people (with appropriate protective measures) where all patrons are immune (fully vaccinated or recovered from COVID-19 within previous 6 months); or,
2. Where patrons have mixed immunity status, pods of up to 6 participants will be permitted (excluding adult leaders/teachers).

The guidelines set out the precautions that should be taken by clubs to minimise the risks of the possible spread of virus and are organised under the following headings:

- Organising training pods for groups with mixed immunity
- Pods and social distancing
- Arriving at and leaving sessions
- Covid Officer
- Facilities and equipment
- Attendance sheets and health screening
- Checking immunity status

The following sections of this document are relevant to the

<b>Fully immune training</b>	<b>Mixed immunity training</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arriving at and leaving sessions</li><li>• Covid officer</li><li>• Facilities and equipment</li><li>• Attendance sheets and health screening</li><li>• Checking immunity status</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organising training pods for groups with mixed immunity</li><li>• Pods and social distancing</li><li>• Arriving at and leaving sessions</li><li>• Covid Officer</li><li>• Facilities and equipment</li><li>• Attendance sheets and health screening</li></ul>

## Organising training pods for groups with mixed immunity

Where there are groups with mixed immunity levels, indoor training groups should be divided into **pods with a maximum of 6 participants** in each. Fencing bouts and drills are permitted with the use of this pod training format.

The pod structure applies for all stages of the training session - warmup, footwork, drills, bouting, etc.. There should be no mixing between participants from different pods before, during, or after the session.

Each pod should limit their activity to a predefined area which is visually marked out and directionally signed.

The composition of pods should be communicated as early as possible to all participants. If possible this should be done before the participants arrive for the session. Participants pre-booking sessions should help in this regard.

Any coach working with more than one training pod in a session, must maintain social distancing at all times from all participants. This means no provision of individual lessons. Their role should be overseeing the activity of the pods.

If a coach is working with one pod only then the coach counts towards the limit of six participants in that pod but they may, as a result, provide individual coaching to the other members of the pod.

The individuals within pods should remain consistent in order to limit social contacts where possible. If hosting multiple training sessions in a week, the same individuals should be within the same pods where possible.

Participants should keep their gear near/in their pod area to avoid situations where they have to move around the training space and pass through/near the space being used by another pod.

### **Sessions must be organised with pre-booking and health screening of all participants.**

Groups with mixed immunity can also continue outdoor training if desired. There will be no covid related restrictions on outdoor sessions.

## Pods and social distancing

Steps need to be taken to ensure social distancing procedures are followed during fencing sessions. While this is not possible during a fencing match, the risks of transmission of the covid-19 virus should be significantly limited by following the following guidelines:

- Each pod should maintain social distancing from every other pod for the whole session.
- Sessions should be planned to allow for a two metre gap between pods at all times. This includes limiting the number of pods allowed at the session to facilitate this measure.
- Within a pod, when participants are not taking part in a drill, bout or activity, they should observe should maintain a 2 metre social distance from other members of their pod.
- Physical contact:

- No physical contact should be planned during the sessions. The requirement for shaking hands after a match or drill has been suspended at all levels of fencing for the foreseeable future and should not be done at any time.
- Games or drills with physical contact are to be avoided. This also applies to coaching - there should be no hands-on adjustments or physical contact for the purposes of coaching.
- A gap of at least 15 minutes should be scheduled between sessions to avoid contact between participants as they enter and exit the club.
- There should be no sharing of food or drinks between participants. Participants should bring their own water bottle to sessions.
- Clubs need to plan in advance to measure the available space for training and ensure that they **limit attendance in accordance with the requirements for pods, social distancing**, and the planned activities. This means that clubs must plan for:
  1. Participants to be able to maintain 2 metres social distance from other members of their pod when not taking part in a bout or drill. This includes being at least 2 metres away from a fencing piste when not fencing.
  2. Each pod to have its own area that keeps all pod members at least 2 metres away from members of any other pod.
  3. Space for coaches overseeing the session to maintain a 2 metre social distance from participants.
  4. The attendance limits should be communicated to members in advance and when a session is fully subscribed no more participants should be permitted entry to the training venue.
- If you have any issues working out how many pods can fit into your training area, you can contact Fencing Ireland with details and measurements of your training space for more detailed advice on the allowed amount.

To any independent onlooker it should be clear that the pods are completely separate groups operating independent of one another with no interaction or sharing of equipment and there is no opportunity for them to mix or stray into one another's group or playing space.

## Arriving at and leaving sessions

In line with the return of public and private transport participants may wish to return to the use of carpooling. Private transport carrying those not yet vaccinated or of mixed immunity should be aware of the higher risk. The use of appropriate face coverings is recommended. If carpooling consider use of a pod system in which the same participants pool together for all activities.

## Covid Officer

All clubs should have a named Covid Officer present at every session. This person will be responsible for ensuring that the guidelines set out in this document are followed. This person should, therefore, be aware of all detail

relating to the implementation of these guidelines. They should take charge of the arrival and sign in as well as the screening processes, sanitation stations, and ensuring social distancing. They will also take charge if a participant feels ill with covid symptoms during a session.

Before undertaking this role, Covid Officers should complete the Covid Officer training available at: <https://www.sportireland.ie/covid19/course>

## Facilities and equipment

This will likely be the most onerous but also the most important section of these guidelines. Due to the nature of how the Covid-19 virus spreads, significant precautions will have to be taken with equipment.

### Facilities

- Changing facilities and showers may now be provided. Social distancing measures should be implemented in changing areas for example the use of every second changing space/lockers/shower head etc.
- Face masks should be worn in shared areas when not taking part in fencing training. Showers are an exception to this rule.
- Ensure only necessary participants/support staff have access to changing rooms.
- We advise keeping windows/doors open where possible to aid with air circulation.
- The training space should be well ventilated. All venues should ensure that all available doors and windows remain open prior to, during and post event. If there is any doubt regarding the efficacy of ventilation in a venue, clubs could consider using the use of CO2 monitors as a mechanism to ensure ventilation is maintained. The Cleaning & Ventilation of facilities should be conducted in accordance with the Governments most recent Work Safely Protocol. This document can be found on gov.ie, relevant information can also be found in the appendices to this document (transcribed from Sport Ireland's guidance for individual, indoor training).
- Clubs should ensure deep cleaning of shared areas on a regular basis.
- Clubs should implement flow management systems where necessary.

### Personal hygiene

- The club should provide sanitisation stations as appropriate on entrances and in shared areas.
- All members are encouraged to adopt good respiratory hygiene, covering their nose and mouth when they cough or sneeze, or using a tissue which is immediately disposed of.
- Face-masks are not compulsory when fencing but should be worn when not exercising.

### Equipment

- Every possible and practical step should be taken to limit the sharing of equipment. When at all possible, personal gear should be used before club gear.
- If weapons, or bodywires are shared in a session they should be thoroughly disinfected by the person who used them last. They should also be disinfected at the end of every session. This disinfection can be achieved through the use of sprays and wipes.
- Masks, jackets, plastrons, and breeches **should not be shared** within one session and should be disinfected before being used at another session.
- Gloves should not be shared within a session and should not be used by another person at a different session unless they have been washed at a temperature of at least 60°C between the sessions.

## Attendance sheets and health screening

In the event that a participant in a club session later test positive for the Covid-19 virus, they may have to undergo contact tracing. To this end we asking all clubs to maintain an **attendance sheet** at every session. These attendance sheets should be **electronic**. These attendance sheets should record the name, email address, and phone number of each participant.

It is also important that participants **screen** themselves before attending sessions. No person (participant, coach or spectator) should attend a session:

- if they have COVID-19,
- if they have symptoms of COVID-19,
- if they are waiting for the results of a test for COVID-19, or
- if anyone in their household has suspected COVID-19.

In accordance with GDPR requirements, information should be available to all members as to the purpose of collecting this data as well as what the data may be used for. The member should record their agreement for those uses when filling out the sheet. Furthermore, these records should be destroyed after the expiration of the need for COVID-19 protocols or one year, whichever is the sooner.

## Checking immunity status

If clubs organising sessions for those 'where all patrons are immune', the immunity status of participants should be checked. This can be achieved by asking members to show their EU Digital COVID Certificate.

## Appendices

Cleaning & Ventilation of facilities should be conducted in accordance with the Governments most recent Work Safely Protocol.

### Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

Ventilation refers to the movement of outdoor air into a building, and the circulation of that air within the building or room. This can be achieved through natural means (e.g. opening a window) or mechanical means (e.g. a central heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

Natural ventilation through the introduction of fresh air into the workplace e.g. opening doors and windows. Cross-ventilation is a good option for window ventilation as it facilitates the quick exchange of room air for fresh air through widely opened windows opposite to each other where possible. Propping open internal doors may increase air movement and ventilation rate. (Note: fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire).

Mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. These provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings such as buildings and vehicles. Switching off air conditioning is not required to manage the risk of COVID19. However, as many air conditioning units just heat, cool and recirculate the air, it is important to check ventilation systems to ensure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air (from a clean source) and that recirculation of untreated air is avoided. Where workplaces have Local Exhaust Ventilation, the make-up air should ideally come from outdoor air rather than from adjacent rooms.

### Cleaning

Cleaning of areas must be conducted at regular intervals.

Further information on cleaning in non-healthcare settings is available from the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control \(ECDC\)](#).

Sporting Bodies must:

- Implement thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. If disinfection of an area is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning.
- Ensure contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, door handles and handrails are visibly clean at all times and are cleaned at least twice daily. Additionally sports equipment should be cleaned before and after use.
- Implement modified cleaning intervals for sports facilities. This applies especially for washroom facilities, lockers and any communal spaces that may be open. Cleaning should be performed at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty.

- Provide coaches/ participants with essential cleaning materials to keep their own areas clean (for example wipes/disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins/bags).
- Increase number of waste collection points and ensure these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.
- Records should be maintained for all cleaning.