

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ITALIAN FEDERATION OF SPORTS MEDICINE (FMSI) TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) IN THE SPORTS WORLD.

GENERAL INFORMATION

For a proper management of the COVID-19 emergency in the sports world, it is necessary to start with an important premise: currently the virus shows very high levels of infectivity but, luckily, the mortality rate is low.

It is also necessary to point out that initially in Italy the screening by pharyngeal swab has included asymptomatic patients, while, starting from the 26th of February, following the meeting of the European Ministries of Health, it was decided to perform the screening only on symptomatic subjects and on those who show other characteristics that may increase the risk of infection. Moreover, the deaths in Italy concerned people with a weakened immune system due to comorbidities (overlapping of different pathologies).

Therefore, for athletes, a preventive intervention is required through the adoption of hygiene rules and good practices to be observed in everyday life, as well as in competition and training. This is especially important both in the amateur and professional contest, which is closely monitored by the Team Physician.

A direct line of coordination between each country's governance (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Sports, etc.), the National Olympic Committee and the National Associations of Sports Medicine is recommended in order to share and guarantee the respect of the same guidelines.

The Italian Federation of Sports Medicine (FMSI), together with the National Federations' Chief Medical officers and in line with the Italian Ministry of Health, has developed the following recommendations, which are specifically addressed to competition, training, competitions abroad and also take into consideration the distinctive characteristic of the different sports disciplines.

The common purpose we aim to achieve is to guarantee that physical activity will be performed in the best possible conditions without health risks.

In this regard, FMSI has established a Scientific Board, composed as follows:

- Maurizio Casasco, FMSI and EFSMA President; Contract Professor at Post-graduate School of Specialization in Sports Medicine, University of Milan;
- Roberto Bernabei, Full Professor of Internal Medicine and Director of the Department of Geriatrics, Neurosciences & Orthopedics, Catholic University of Sacred Heart, University Hospital "A. Gemelli", Rome; Past President of the Italian Society of Gerontology and Geriatrics;
- Massimo Galli, Full Professor of Infectious Diseases and Director of the Department of Biomedical and Clinical Sciences "L. Sacco", University of Milan;
- Ranieri Guerra, Assistant Director-General, World Health Organization (Geneva);

- Maurizio Memo, Full Professor of Pharmacology, University of Brescia;
- Sergio Pecorelli, Professor Emeritus of Gynecology and Obstetrics, University of Brescia; President of the Giovanni Lorenzini Foundation, New York; Past President of the Italian Medicines Agency (AIFA);
- Fabio Pigozzi, FIMS President; Full Professor of Internal Medicine and Deputy Rector University “Foro Italico”, Rome; President of FMSI Scientific Board;
- Carlo Signorelli, Full Professor of Hygiene and Public Health, University “Vita-Salute” San Raffaele, Milan; Past President of the Italian Society of Hygiene (SItI);
- Alberto Villani, Head of General Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases Unit, Pediatrics Hospital “Bambino Gesù”, Rome; President of the Italian Society of Pediatrics (SIP).

HYGIENE RULES AND GOOD PRACTICES

We present below some simple but essential health and hygiene standards, addressed to sports clubs and managers of sports facilities, that should be followed in the locker rooms, common spaces and hygienic services of the facilities in order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 infection during competitions and training sessions.

These recommendations should be clearly visible to all and should be respected by athletes, chaperones, referees, trainers, managers, massage therapists, audience and authorized personnel.

1. Do not drink from the same bottle/thermos/glass neither in competition nor in training, always use disposable glasses or a personal/personalized bottle. Do not exchange objects (towels, bathrobes, etc.) with other people.
2. Avoid eating inside the locker rooms.
3. Always store personal clothes and objects in your bags, without leaving them exposed in the locker rooms or in common containers.
4. Immediately dispose of paper tissues or other used materials, such as plasters or bandages, in the specific containers.
5. Wash hands accurately as often as possible: washing and sanitizing hands is essential to prevent the infection. Hands should be washed with water and soap for at least 20 seconds and, after a proper rinse, dried with a disposable hand towel. When water and soap is unavailable, it is possible to use a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
6. When using common hygienic services, avoid touching the water tap before and after washing hands, using a disposable hand towel to open and close it.

7. Promote the use of automatic dispensers with sanitizing solutions in the locker rooms and hygienic services.
8. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
9. When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, preferably disposable, or with your arm, never with hands.
10. Ventilate the rooms as often as possible.
11. Periodically disinfect tables, benches, chairs, racks, floors, faucets, handles, showers and hygienic services, with sanitizing solutions of bleach or chlorine, solvents, 75% ethanol, peracetic acid and chloroform.
12. In case of physical activity in swimming pools a constant monitoring of chemical (chlorine or other sanitizing solutions) and physical (for example, pH and temperature, which also influences the level of chlorination) parameters should be required.
13. Athletes who show visible symptoms of an ongoing respiratory infection and/or fever must immediately move away from the rest of the team, possibly isolating themselves, and warn the Team Physician (for professional sports) or the Federation Chief Medical Officer during sports gatherings, who will call the emergency numbers, when it is indicated. Those athletes should not go to an Emergency Room.
14. It is recommended to get vaccinated against the influenza as soon as possible, if subjects are not vaccinated yet, in order to facilitate the diagnosis and the management of suspected cases.

It is also necessary to monitor subjects with gastrointestinal symptoms (not necessarily typical).
15. Keep informed about the athletes or authorized personnel's possible contacts (also in the family contest) with people coming from risk or quarantined areas.
16. The sports medical examination is a fundamental screening tool. A careful anamnesis and objective examination are essential to identify subjects potentially at risk of infection or who show symptoms.
17. In case of national sports gatherings or international events, also abroad, it is always necessary to arrange for the presence of a Sports Medicine Physician who can evaluate in advance all the participants, indicating which subjects are at risk and consequently adopting the proper isolation measures, as specified by the appropriate management procedures.
18. For all Team Physicians and all the sports societies with athletes that participate to international events, it is necessary to carefully monitor all the countries of destination or departure.
19. In the locker rooms the access should be limited to the same authorized personnel.
20. On the field, the access should be limited to the personnel who is strictly necessary to the competition.

21. During Antidoping testing, in addition to disposable paper rolls to cover the table, provide sanitizing solutions to wash hands only after the test. Before the testing, hands must be washed only with water in compliance to WADA's regulation.
22. Health Supervisors/Team Physicians, especially for professional teams, must pay particular attention to the anamnesis, objective examination and temperature evaluation of both athletes and team personnel /technicians during training and pre-competition retreats, constantly updating the health profile of the athletes. Moreover, before the competition, Team Physicians of both teams must have a briefing to exchange information, while always respecting the professional secret.
23. Health Supervisors/Team Physicians of professional teams must verify beforehand the hygienic conditions of all the locker rooms, including those of the host team, of the referees and ball persons, as well as the room for the Antidoping testing.
24. Health Supervisors/Team Physicians of professional teams must actively participate to the organization of competitions abroad, verifying the logistics and foreseeing possible precautionary protection. Health Supervisors/Team Physicians must also guarantee their presence during the whole duration of the away game.
25. Particular and conscientious attention must be paid to young athletes, in compliance to State Regulations and Federation rules. Federations' awareness to take on unequivocal and coordinated directions should be promoted.
26. It is recommended that healthcare workers, paramedical staff, physicians and massage therapists, who are constantly in contact with the athletes, in particular in the case of professional teams, do not work contextually in other environments or have external activities that could be at risk of infection.
27. Notwithstanding the limitation described in the point number 2 regarding the necessity to avoid eating food inside the locker rooms, for professional sports it is also recommended to identify a specific area for the post-competition nutritional reintegration.
28. It is recommended to avoid the presence of television operators for shootings inside locker rooms before the competition, finding a shared solution in case of specific contractual obligation for professional sports.