



# NEW ZEALAND ICE HOCKEY FEDERATION

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New Zealand Ice Hockey Federation  
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New Zealand

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With the Government possibly allowing sport to return in the coming weeks, the NZIHF has developed some protocols that will help its members play ice hockey in a way that keeps everyone safe. The purpose is to give guidance to regional clubs, associations and ice rinks on how to create a safe operating environment.

As you would have seen, the changes in Alert Level 2 have allowed people to reconnect with friends and family, go shopping, or travel domestically – however, we always need to follow public health guidelines which include:

- Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap
- Keep 2m distance from people (off the rink)
- Try not to touch your face
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow, even in hockey gear
- Stay home if you are sick



As such, your rinks and your clubs should aim to minimise any interaction between groups, customers, participants, volunteers, and spectators. This can be done by focusing on maximising online payments, registration, payment, scheduling and meetings. This can also be done by creating pathways into the building, changing rooms, and rinks. This also includes getting people out and keeping these two groups separate.

To achieve this, you need to clearly identify an entrance and exit. Use stanchions, barriers, cones, or floor markings to define these areas.

Anywhere where gear is distributed, either at your rink or with your club, areas need to be defined for queueing and this should not interfere with your pathways. Whilst we appreciate that this might push you for space, at this time it might mean that any passing out of gear is required from a different part of your rink or not at all.

When people use this gear, consider setting time limits and maximum occupancy for dressing room use. This will minimise inactions in the doorways.

If youth players don't require any gear, clubs should consider asking youth to come to the rink fully kitted (without skates and helmet). This will allow you to further minimise possible interactions. However, clubs need to work with their local rink to have a common area with a marked physically distanced seating common area to put on skates or remove skate guards.

If gear is required to be borrowed from the club, a sanitisation process for this gear needs to be



established. This can range from lending until level 1 is reached and must be sanitised before the gear is returned, or the club putting gear through a sanitisation process that is known to kill the virus.

When we are allowed to return to the rink, there will likely be limitations on spectators. This will need to be effectively managed with defined areas for spectators that do not interfere with your pathways or leave any questions about how spectators will socially distance in this environment. This can be achieved through floor markings, marking available seating spaces and posters reminding people to socially distance.

Keeping attendance below any limitation can be easily managed through the allocation of time slots and tracing registers. By allowing participants and spectators only to enter your premises 15 minutes before the ice time and getting everyone to bring their own pen. You only require one person to observe at a distance. By doing this, and having one contact tracing list per allotted time, this will help with contact tracing, make it easier to keep records.

Before re-opening your clubs, it is recommended that each club or team host an online meeting with the families to run through plans and allow them to ask questions as it relates to:

- What they can expect
- Planning for the first session
- Precautions being taken to keep the rink clean and safe
- Participants with risk factors or illnesses should not attend in-person training and ice sessions
- Participants with symptoms or signs of illness are strictly advised not to enter the premises and to seek medical assistance
- All participants need to be symptom-free 4 days after experiencing their last symptoms before considering returning to the sport

A coach should be prepared to require that a player exhibiting signs or symptoms of illness must be required to leave practice (this applies in the same way as a suspected concussion).

However, the initial focus should be a fun, inclusive environment, with every attempt made to minimise cost. Please talk to your local NZIHF Management Committee Representative to see how the NZIHF can help. However, this does not need to be a direct minimisation of cost, you can look at making your payment/refund policies more flexible so that families do not feel as pressured to make an ice session. Promote a more flexible policy around supporting, and not punishing, a player if they decide not to attend training sessions.

Some items must remain mandatory including:

- Players need to bring and label their own water bottles, no sharing of water. No unnamed water bottles are allowed at training or on the bench
- Player's towels are for personal use only
- Players who are using the changing rooms need to limit their use as much as possible
- Within a changing room, each player must have a 2-meter circle around them. In other, more real terms, if they are sitting in a seat, they can't touch anyone with their stick.
- For age groups where parents need to assist players with equipment, limit the number of parents in the locker room at any one time. Or ask that the children do as best they can and use the common area to tighten or adjust.
- Players need to be prepared to disinfect fitness equipment immediately after use.



With all of these ideas, make sure each club lays out and communicates a set plan for both families/players and coaches.

### **Parents/Spectators**

- Families should be asked to minimize the number of parents/spectators that come with the player to limit the number of people in the facility
- Communicate with families to make sure they're aware of the facility's spectator areas and rules around physical distancing
- Appropriate supervision is recommended in the changing rooms for youth

### **On-Ice Practices**

- Notify and reinforce the message that players and coaches need to observe physical distancing recommendations while on the ice
- Avoid utilising benches, but during game situations, aim to space out along the bench. Consider maximum numbers on a team to allow this to be facilitated. This is facility dependant, so would need to be considered in the context of your bench size
- Avoid drills that require players to stand in line
- When designing practice, utilise station-based practices and have players/coaches spread out to maintain needed physical distancing
- Minimise whiteboard sessions where players could congregate
- Utilize non-contact drills
- Coaches need to be cognizant to avoid talking within proximity of players' faces
- When leaving the ice, coaches could excuse players one-by-one giving appropriate time for each player to get off the ice. Coaches need to plan to leave an appropriate amount of time at the end of their ice session to complete the dismissal process

### **After you leave the ice**

- Encourage participants to minimize their time in or around the facility
- Have them put on their shoes or skate guards so that they can leave quickly in the same marked common space
- Remind players and parents to follow physical distancing guidelines when leaving the facility
- Players should disinfect helmets, sticks, and skates after each training session
- Wash clothes (jerseys, pant shells, socks, and gloves) with high temperature after each training session
- Each team is to have an allocated team rep or with youth teams, a coach, who must check that all items are removed from the changing rooms, all rubbish is collected and bagged. Anyone doing this needs the appropriate PPE and should dispose of their PPE with the rubbish after their task

### **Important Changes in the Game**

- There are to be no handshakes and no hugs after goal celebrations; instead, consider blue line salutes or fist-bumping.
- The penalty box is to have one player only. If a second penalty occurs, this is to be served outside of the bench area.

Most importantly, work with your rink partner to make this a safe but also a fun environment for the participants, **while still abiding by our guidelines**. These are stressful times and we want to make sure that hockey is a positive place for both physical and mental health.



Looking forward, we will see what national programmes we might be able to implement. With the National body looking after all interregional hockey, we should be able to make sure each region is maintaining the Government guidance. It must be noted that no interregional hockey should be undertaken unless specifically sanctioned by the NZIHF.

Please note that whilst this seems exhaustive, these guidelines will be adjusted and reviewed but if you have any individual problems, please feel free to contact the following NZIHF Representatives:

**Medical Officer:**

Bret Dougherty  
[bretdo@gmail.com](mailto:bretdo@gmail.com)

**Health & Safety Officer:**

Quentin Blair  
[que.blair@gmail.com](mailto:que.blair@gmail.com)

