



City of Richmond Hill

Safety Protocols for Tennis Clubs

May 20, 2020



Introduction

This document is a guide for tennis clubs, players, and club pros on how to make a safe return to the sport given the Covid-19 pandemic. The activities must always comply with the social distancing measures and recommendations issued by federal and provincial government authorities, including the arrival and departure of players.

Sports support physical and mental health. With the approach of summer, more and more residents will be looking for a safe way to pursue sports outside. Tennis is a sport in which players are typically at least two metres apart. It makes sense to consider tennis as one of the first sports that can be allowed again, once public health authorities say that it is safe to begin reopening some facilities.

Drawing from public health directives, and the guidelines from many tennis sporting associations, this document offers detailed protocols for the safest possible return to tennis during the Covid-19 pandemic. These protocols are designed to be strict, and to operate in the first stage of reopening.

See [Appendix A](#) for a chart of restrictions for subsequent stages of reopening.

See [Appendix B](#) for a list of links to sporting organization guidelines for safely reopening tennis.

These guidelines target four complementary goals:

1. Maintain physical distancing at the club and on the courts
2. Work to keep the virus out by monitoring access, promoting hygiene, and cleaning
3. Keep records on who plays at a club, to assist with any needed contact tracing
4. Educate players, attendants, and pros on best practices.

These guidelines require changes in the way all clubs operate for the duration of the pandemic, and radical changes for some clubs.

1. Physical distancing – staying 2 metres apart

Physical distancing has been a key safety protocol during the Covid-19 pandemic, and its promotion at clubs, off and on court, is key to a return to the courts.

Physical distancing off court

- Courts are to remain locked with a keyed padlock unless there is a club attendant, volunteer or paid, onsite to ensure physical distancing protocols are followed and players' names recorded.



- **Note:** Club Pros will be considered a club attendant and are allowed to open the teaching court to their students keeping other courts locked and unused.
- For safety reasons, clubs will not leave courts open for public hours in 2020.
- Club attendants will check in players from a distance of 2 metres, with the area being marked off to promote safety. Players under the age of 18 should be asked for written consent from a parent/guardian authorizing them to participate in their tennis session.
- Club attendants will direct players on and off courts, opening, shutting and cleaning gate touch points.
- Clubs will measure and mark waiting spots near the court gates so players wait 2 metres apart at each court gate, so as not to crowd the attendant.
- As an extra precaution, attendants must wear masks or bandanas over their nose and mouth and gloves when checking in players or escorting them on or off the courts.
- Clubhouses, including washrooms, will be inaccessible to players and the public.
- Clubhouses will be accessible only to club attendants and pros, for breaks and access to cleaning supplies.
- Members will bring their own balls and mark them so that they can handle only their own balls.
- Players will book courts before they arrive at the club, either by phone, or by using an online booking system. Guests of players must be identified when booking is made.
- Members will come to the facility no more than 10 minutes before the time expected to play, and leave when they have finished playing.
- Clubs will not collect any payments due in cash.
- **No** in-person (non-online) social events (such as round robins, leagues, camps or junior events) or drop-in events are allowed.

Physical distancing on court

- Court are only to be used by a maximum of 2 households at a time; this means **only singles tennis** is allowed until further notice from City and public health authorities, with one person on each side of the net and no changing ends. **No doubles tennis** is to be played.
- Lessons are allowed, but only with a maximum of four people per lesson, with all people in each lesson being from the same household. The members of the one household will stay on one side, and the teaching pro, on the other. (Junior Programs with participants from more than one household not allowed.)



- Start with every other court open to allow the club, monitors and members adjust to the physical distancing, monitoring access, tracking and playing protocols.
- Only every other court is to have a net installed so that players are never playing on adjacent courts and so cannot accidentally come close to each other while playing.
- Ask players to remain on the same side of the court and avoid changing ends.
- Do not let players manipulate the practice equipment. Coaches should take charge of picking up the balls.

2. Monitoring access; promoting hygiene; cleaning protocols

Clubs will adopt protocols to keep sick players away, to promote good hygiene, and to clean and disinfect surfaces and items at the club.

Monitoring and restricting access

- Club attendants will ask players to note the conditions for playing, that is, players are told they must not play and will be refused play if:
 - Are exhibiting any symptoms of the coronavirus: mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough and difficulty breathing, or other symptoms of Covid-19.
 - Have been in contact with someone with Covid-19 in the last 14 days.
 - Have travelled within the last 14 days.
- Club signage will also stress the need for people in these categories to go and then stay home.
 - **Note:** temporary signage is available at <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-how-you-can-help/covid-19spread-the-word/>

Promoting Hygiene

- Reduce the number of accessible touch points
- All common area chairs and tables should be stacked, roped off or removed from the area to prevent congregating and touching.
 - All court gates and stair rails should be wrapped with caution tape to discourage touching, or else should be wiped down every hour.
 - All scoring devices will be taken off the courts to prevent touching.
 - All tennis equipment, such as squeegees, brooms, line brushes, etc., should be stored; available for use by the attendant only.
 - Keep clubhouses locked.
- Encourage good hygiene

- Make hand sanitizer or wipes available for players and attendants.
- Provide your employees with masks, gloves and all other protective items and ensure that each member of your staff washes their hands regularly
- Display signage about hygiene to encourage handwashing when players arrive home.

Cleaning

- Have club attendants clean and disinfect all surfaces touched by players —such as gate handles, net posts, anything they or others touch – several times a day during opening hours, while wearing disposable gloves.
- Have club attendants clean and disinfect all surfaces touched by staff within the clubhouse —such door handles, computer keyboards, counters, toilets – several times a day, while wearing disposable gloves.
- Consider spraying tennis balls with a disinfectant spray after a session. The use of new balls on a regular basis is strongly recommended.

3. Keep track of who plays or works at the club to assist in contact tracing

Clubs must keep a complete and accurate record of who has been at their club, including the attendant, players, and pros. The records will be kept as a hard copy, with binders and pen disinfected regularly, or using an online system, with the computer and keyboard disinfected regularly. Collecting this information is necessary in case health authorities need to trace who has been at the site. Players must be prepared to show identification to the club attendants or pro.

4. Educate all parties: players, pros, club attendants.

Clubs will inform their members and pros of best practices to follow to maximize safety.

To distribute to all players

Before you play

- Protect against infections:
 - Wash your hands with a disinfectant soap and water (for 20 seconds or longer), or use a hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available, before going to the court.

- Clean and wipe down your equipment, including racquets and water bottles. Do not share racquets or any other equipment such as wristbands, grips, hats and towels.
- Bring a full water bottle to avoid touching a tap or water fountain handle.
- Use new balls and a new grip, if possible.
- Consider taking extra precautions such as wearing gloves and wearing masks while waiting to enter the court.
- If you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue or upper sleeve.
- Arrive as close as possible to when you need to be there.
- Avoid touching court gates, fences, net posts, the net tape, benches, etc.

As you play

- Stay two metres away from your opponent; do not shake hands, or high five, do not approach to talk.
- Avoid touching your face after handling a ball, racquet or other equipment.
- Sanitize your hands promptly if you have touched your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid sharing food, drinks or towels.
- Use your racquet/foot to pick up balls and hit them to your opponent. Avoid using your hands to pick up the balls.
- Stay on your side of court. Avoid changing ends of the court.
- Remain apart from other players when taking a break.
- If a ball from another court comes to you, send it back with a kick or with your racquet.

Note on the use of tennis balls

To date, there has been no known transmission of the COVID-19 virus through the sharing of a tennis ball, but it may be possible. To minimize this risk, players should play with their own tennis balls, marking them so that they know which are theirs, and then be careful not to share them. Should a ball with the other number wind up on your side of the court, do not touch the ball with your hands. Use your racquet head or feet to advance the ball to the other side of the court. There is no need for players from the same household to use different balls.

After playing

- Leave the court when your playing period is over, following the directions of the club attendant and take all your equipment and balls with you.
- Take any garbage with you and dispose of it in appropriate bins off court or take it home.



- Use a hand sanitizer after coming off the court.
- All players should leave the facility immediately after play.

To distribute to pros

- Pros must keep complete and accurate records of who they teach when.
- Pros can teach a maximum of four people in any one lesson, and all people in the lesson must be from the same family or household.
- Pros should limit the amount of equipment they use to reduce the possibility of transmitting the virus and reduce the amount of equipment that he or she needs to clean.
- Tennis equipment (racquets, towels, target cones, ball tubes, etc.) should be touched only by the pro. Players can herd the balls towards the Pro, but only the Pro can pick up the balls.
- The Pro will clean equipment frequently using a disinfectant.
- Teaching pros should have their own marked hoppers and teaching charts to avoid sharing with other pros.
- Practice caution with the tennis balls.
- Encourage players to use their racquet/foot to push balls back and/or hit them to their opponent to avoid using hands and touching the balls.
- For private serving lessons, have customers bring two cans of balls that only they handle for serving.

Appendix A: Chart of protocols for safe reopening

Protocols	Stage 1* "Open select workplaces, allow some small gatherings"	Stage 2 "Open more workplaces and outdoor spaces, allow some larger gatherings"	Stage 3 "Further relax the restrictions on public gatherings, opening all workplaces responsibly"
To facilitate physical distancing			
Type of tennis	Singles	Singles and Doubles	
Maximum # of households on court	2	2	6 6+ (teaching clinics allowed)
Court usage	Start every other court	→ Every court	
Court accessibility (Court attendant is staff, volunteer, or club pro)	Courts locked except when attendant is on site and controls access.		Facilities open with regular cleaning; Court access without onsite attendant as long as call in bookings or booking system are used
Social events	Not allowed	Events with under 20 people allowed with no food or drink allowed	Larger events, with no food or drink, allowed.
Limits on facilities	Benches roped off; clubhouse closed		Benches and clubhouse open as per recommendation of public health authorities
Washroom as per recommendation of public health authorities			
Protection of club employees (in addition to physical distancing)	Attendant must wear a mask and gloves		Mask and gloves optional
Payment for services	No Cash		Cash allowed
Public hours offered	None		6 hours per week (hard court facilities only)
Cleaning			
Equipment and surfaces regularly cleaned	Club attendants regularly clean and disinfect surfaces. Pro and teaching staff regularly clean and disinfect all hard-surfaced teaching equipment		
Record Keeping			
Club keeps records for contact tracing	Members book with club, by phone or using online booking system		
	No walk-ons		Walk-ons allowed



Appendix B: Links to sporting organization guidelines

Tennis Canada

Tips and recommendations for players.

<http://www.tenniscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tips-andrecommendations-for-players.pdf>

Tips and recommendations for club administrators, coaches and anyone organizing tennis activities.

<http://www.tenniscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tips-andrecommendations-for-club-administrators-coaches-and-anyone-organizing-tennisactivities.pdf>

Tennis Manitoba

Best Practices for Players during Covid-19

<http://tennismanitoba.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Best-Practices-PlayersDuring-COVID-19-MB-2.pdf>

Tennis New/ Nouveau-Brunswick

Covid-19 Playing Tennis Safely

<http://newbrunswick.tenniscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/PHASED-INAPPROACH-TO-RETURN-TO-PLAY-FINAL-Version.pdf>

USTA

Player Tips and Recommendations

<https://www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/national/usta-statement-on-safety-ofplaying-tennis-during-the-covid-19-v.html>

Facility and Programming Recommendations

<https://www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/national/playing-tennis-safely--facilityand-programming-recommendations.html>

Österreichischer Tennisverband

https://www.oetv.at/fileadmin/oetv/public/Diverses/flyer_coronaverhaltensregeln_hq.pdf