

Media contact: Jonathan Ghent
Mobile: 585.279.0102
jonathan.ghent@commongroundhealth.org

Pediatricians reinforce COVID-19 guidance for kids returning to sports and physical activity

Interim guidelines are designed to protect school children and teens from cardiac events

ROCHESTER, NY, January 14, 2022 - As cases of COVID-19 increase among local children, a regional task force focused on the safe reopening of schools is advocating for a potentially life-saving set of guidelines for kids to return to sports and physical education after recovering from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 Return to Exercise After COVID-19 Infection guidance was developed by physicians of the Finger Lakes Reopening Schools Safely Task Force's Health Workgroup, and based on clinical recommendations from the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP).

The group, convened by Common Ground Health, wants families to know that COVID-19 infection can pose risks to kids and teens' hearts.

Kids 5 years and older who have moderate or severe symptoms (fever for four or more days, or a week or more of body aches, chills or extreme tiredness) should see a health care provider 10 days after the start of infection to determine if they need to gradually return to play, physical education and sports.

Kids 12 years and older who play intense or competitive sports should also see a health care provider 10 days after the start of infection before returning to intense or competitive sports.

Young people may be referred to a cardiology clinic for further evaluation if they have any concerning cardiac symptoms after COVID-19. Once a child is cleared, they can slowly return to sports, gym and recess, but they should continue to be monitored for cardiac symptoms.

The return to exercise guidance has been in effect for the last year and is intended to:

- inform and educate the community about inflammatory risks to the heart and potential concerning symptoms in specific higher risk groups of children and teens (those with moderate to severe symptoms and youth 12 years and older who participate in competitive, high intensity sports);
- help encourage access to medical assessment for these higher risk groups of children and youth; and

- encourage monitoring of those participating in competitive, high intensity sports as they resume activity.

While isolation periods have been shortened due to the reduced duration of infectivity of Omicron, allowing a full 10-day recovery period before returning to sports, gym or recess is important for the health of these higher risk youth based on current evidence and best practice guidelines from the AAP.

This guidance is not mandated by New York State but is supported by pediatric specialists, primary care providers and primary care practices serving children in our community.

Dr. George Porter, division director of Pediatric Cardiology at UR Medicine/Golisano Children's Hospital, said: "While most children only experience incidental symptoms post-COVID-19 infection, we don't want even one child to slip through the cracks. This guidance provides a pathway for us to keep children and teens as safe as possible."

Dr. Steve Schulz, Rochester Regional Health pediatric medical director, said: "We understand that with so much information circulating on the COVID-19 virus it can be confusing for parents to understand what is best for their own children. If your child has been recently infected and you have questions, reach out to your child's primary healthcare provider who can help you navigate whether or not your child needs an assessment. Together we will work on a plan that is best for your child."

Dina Faticone, chief program officer at Common Ground Health, said: "Our local healthcare providers continue to collaborate in unprecedented ways to protect the health of children across our community during this pandemic. These recommendations were developed to ensure kids can get back to what they do best as soon as it is safe to do so – play!"

To learn more, please review the *COVID-19 Return to Exercise After COVID-19 Infection infographic for families* at [commongroundhealth.org/returntoplay](https://www.commongroundhealth.org/returntoplay) published by the Finger Lakes Schools Reopening Task Force.

About Common Ground Health

Founded in 1974, Common Ground is the health research and planning organization for the nine-county Rochester-Finger Lakes region. We bring together leaders from health care, education, business, government and other sectors to find common ground on health challenges. Learn more at www.commongroundhealth.org.

###