



COVID-19 Testing for Minnesota Organized Sports Participants

4/22/2021

Minnesota is experiencing a surge of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Despite our vaccination progress, the current situation raises serious concern. Much of the key data gathered by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) resembles the early stages of the devastating surge Minnesota faced in the late fall and early winter of 2020. The increasing presence of COVID-19 variants has added new risks that we are still working to understand, including the B.1.1.7 variant, which spreads more easily and may make people sicker than usual. The Minnesota Department of Health also continues to see cases and outbreaks of COVID-19 connected to participants of organized sports activities. With these rising case and hospitalization rates, we need additional strategies to make sure sports and in-person learning can continue.

Frequent testing is a critical strategy to identify COVID-19 cases—including in people who have no noticeable symptoms—to stop the spread at an early stage. **Effective Monday, April 26, 2021, Minnesota is offering organized sports teams additional testing support and options to order and provide weekly COVID-19 testing to all participants.** The Minnesota Department of Health encourages all participants (including athletes, coaches, referees, volunteers, etc.) on a team to participate in weekly testing. Testing is also just one of many important strategies, so it is important to emphasize that organized sports teams must continue to follow the requirements and recommendations in the [COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth and Adults](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf), including guidance relating to quarantine, isolation, and close contact identification.

This document explains recommended COVID-19 testing options and includes frequently asked questions and answers, all of which provide details on how sports teams can carry out testing and other key information for teams and participants.

COVID-19 testing for organized sports

Effective Monday, April 26, 2021, all participants (including athletes, coaches, referees, volunteers, etc.) of organized sports activities are strongly encouraged to participate in weekly COVID-19 testing.

- Organized sports include any sports activity where participants are organized by entities, associations, clubs, or organizations providing for registration of participants and oversight on a regular basis for a defined period of time.
 - For more information, see the [COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth and Adults \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf) and [Executive Order 21-11 \(www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/21-11.pdf\)](http://www.leg.mn.gov/archive/execorders/21-11.pdf).
- This guidance does not apply to teams or athletes participating in professional or intercollegiate sports activities.
 - Intercollegiate sports teams and athletes must follow the [COVID-19 Intercollegiate Sports Guidance for Higher Education \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/sportsihe.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/sportsihe.pdf).
 - Professional sports teams and athletes must follow the [COVID-19 Professional Sports Guidance \(dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_guidelines_professional_sports.pdf\)](http://dli.mn.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/COVID_19_preparedness_plan_requirements_guidelines_professional_sports.pdf).

Weekly COVID-19 testing

- Organized sports teams and participants have a number of choices to provide weekly testing to all participants. These options include, but are not limited to:

COVID-19 testing options in Minnesota

Testing option	Description	Where to find more information
Testing through school (Vault PCR saliva test)	Receive a test on-site at your school or within your school district.	Contact your school district regarding the availability of these tests.
COVID-19 Test at Home (Vault PCR saliva test)	No-cost, at-home option for anyone with or without symptoms.	COVID-19 Test at Home (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome)

Testing option	Description	Where to find more information
COVID-19 community testing (Vault PCR saliva test)	No-cost, in-person option for anyone with or without symptoms.	COVID-19 Community Testing (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/community) Schedule Appointment with Vault Health (mncovidtestingappt.as.me/schedule.php)
COVID-19 Organized Sports Bulk Testing (Vault PCR saliva test)	No-cost, bulk-order COVID-19 testing for organized sports teams. Available for either in-person or Zoom-enabled COVID-19 testing.	State of MN COVID-19 Testing Order Form for Organized Sports (vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/mnsport)
Other COVID-19 testing options through local clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies	A map and search fields are provided where you can narrow down your search to testing options by city or zip code.	Finding Testing Locations (mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations) (located near the bottom of the page)

More information about bulk ordering from Vault

Teams may order tests directly to one person from the team to be used for all participants (also free of charge) from Vault. The organization will need to instruct those participating in this testing option to register directly with Vault. Vault requires minors (those under 18 years old) to involve a parent or guardian to register and provide consent.

- Ordering tests
 - Teams submit their Vault bulk test order by completing this electronic form: [State of MN COVID-19 Testing Order Form for Organized Sports \(vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/mnsport\)](http://vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/mnsport).
 - Vault bulk test orders must be submitted by Wednesday at 6 p.m. each week. These tests will arrive to the designated location by the following Tuesday.
 - Organizations are allowed to re-order weekly or as needed based on testing usage.

Teams ordering bulk COVID-19 tests from Vault have two test type options, and teams can select one or both types of bulk tests:

- Coordinate and administer in-person testing
 - Teams choosing this option must designate one or more test coordinators to complete the virtual training to conduct self-administered testing in person. Coordinators who complete this training may supervise the self-collection of test samples by participants.
 - The required Vault self-guided training for test coordinators can be accessed at [Saliva Collection Process Overview \(docsend.com/view/f9hbvw2jcfp8fe46\)](https://docsend.com/view/f9hbvw2jcfp8fe46). This DocSend page will require you to enter your email address to be verified by Claire from Vault.
- Send tests home with participants
 - Teams choosing this option must instruct participants to follow Vault testing instructions in the testing kit, which require the tester to join an online Zoom room so a Vault professional can supervise specimen collection. (Note: A test sample will not be tested if it is collected without supervision.)
 - Teams are strongly encouraged to consider ways to provide technology and support to students who do not have access to home internet.

Planning and administration of team-supervised testing

This section provides guidance for teams that choose to directly oversee and administer the testing of participants.

- Identify at least one testing coordinator.
 - Teams must identify a testing coordinator before testing begins. The testing coordinator's responsibilities include the planning and supervision of participant testing. Teams should also consider identifying one or more alternative testing coordinators who can fill in if the primary testing coordinator is absent.
 - Test coordinators conducting free Vault COVID-19 saliva tests will need to complete an online training through Vault at [Saliva Collection Process Overview \(docsend.com/view/f9hbvw2jcfp8fe46\)](https://docsend.com/view/f9hbvw2jcfp8fe46), which will provide instruction on the testing process and an opportunity to ask questions of a Vault professional. This DocSend page will require you to enter your email address to be verified by Claire from Vault.
 - Testing coordinators are responsible for:
 - Setting up testing events, ensuring technology and internet is available, assisting with online registration and log-in, and troubleshooting technology issues as needed.
 - Monitoring compliance with face covering, social distancing, and other requirements.
 - Verifying that collection of saliva samples and sample contents meet Vault requirements (saliva, not bubbles or foam, must reach the line).
 - Cleaning and disinfecting as needed for the testing location.
 - Tracking, counting, packaging, and shipping completed testing samples. Test results will be sent to the participant's email or unique Vault ID within 48 hours of the sample being received by the lab.

- Develop a testing plan and manage testing needs.
 - Teams and leagues are strongly encouraged to choose a designated day of the week to test all participants.
 - Plan ahead to ensure test kits are available on the date of testing, considering the number of individuals who will be tested and the number of test kits on hand. To minimize waste and ensure adequate supplies are available, teams are encouraged to only place orders for the number of kits they will need for each test event.
 - If using free Vault bulk COVID-19 test kits, remember:
 - Teams submit their bulk COVID-19 testing requested order by completing the electronic [State of MN COVID-19 Testing Order Form for Organized Sports \(vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/mnsport\)](https://vaulthealth.formstack.com/forms/mnsport).
 - Vault bulk testing orders must be submitted by Wednesday at 6 p.m. each week. These tests will arrive to the designated location by the following Tuesday.
 - Organizations are allowed to re-order weekly or as needed based on testing usage.
- Follow COVID-19 mitigation requirements.
 - Instruct participants to follow face covering requirements. Participants may remove their face coverings when actively self-administering the test.
 - Ensure participants and staff remain 6 feet apart at all times. If direct assistance must be provided to a participant, limit the length of closer interaction to the extent possible.
 - Sanitize testing areas as needed (and between each participant if specific testing station is designated for use by multiple participants).
 - For more information and COVID-19 mitigation strategies for sports teams, see the [COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth and Adults \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf).
- Follow these directions for each self-administered test:
 - Step 1: Instruct the athlete or parent/guardian of the athlete to create an online Vault profile and provide consent for testing. All participants must register using a unique email or by creating a unique user ID and password.
 - Minor participants will need their parent or guardian to provide consent—plan in advance so participants can complete this step before testing if a parent or legal guardian is not present.
 - Step 2: Ensure participants have a smartphone or tablet with internet access and have not smoked, chewed gum, or had anything to eat or drink in the 30 minutes prior to the test.
 - Step 3: Have participants go to COVID.VLT.CO on a smartphone or tablet. Provide a device for participants to use who do not have access to a smartphone or tablet. Disinfect devices used by multiple participants between uses.

- Note: Participants who use the same device to order a saliva test from Vault may experience an error. Advise the participant to open a private browser or manually type in the web address above.
- Step 4: Direct the participant to log in with their username and password and follow the instructions provided on the page, which will include how to log a specimen barcode.
- Step 5: Provide the participant their test tube when prompted; confirm you are administering the test to the right person.
- Step 6: Instruct the student to complete the test according to the protocol described in the test supervisor training. Verify the amount of the sample is sufficient (saliva, not bubbles or foam, must reach the line).
- Step 7: Direct the participant to cover the test tube, shake the solution for five seconds, and place in the biohazard bag.

When the test sample has been collected

- Tests are not temperature sensitive and do not need to be refrigerated.
- Place all tests in a biohazard bag provided by Vault. These bags can hold up to 50 completed test tubes.
- Each biohazard bag must be placed in its own UPS bag provided by Vault. Each bag contains a lining; leave the lining in place and do not remove it.
- Drop off the tests at a UPS Store or UPS direct drop box. DO NOT drop your sample at a UPS pharmacy drop box. Use this UPS locator tool to find a convenient UPS drop off point: [UPS Find a Location \(www.ups.com/dropoff/?loc=en_US\)](https://www.ups.com/dropoff/?loc=en_US).
- Test results are typically available within 48 hours of Vault receiving the sample.

Troubleshooting tips

- If participants are re-directed to the Vault webpage asking for an address for kits to be mailed or other irrelevant questions (during registration, when entering the sample, or completing the testing), this may be a result of saved browser cookies. When this occurs, participants should close the browser and open a private browser and manually reenter COVID.VLT.CO into the browser.
- If participants face difficulty proceeding during the registration process, double check that the birthdate is typed in correctly according to the instructions and that an option is selected for both race and ethnicity categories.
- If the internet connection is lost or the webpage is taking too long to load, participant information usually is not lost. The participant will need to go to COVID.VLT.CO, log in again, and click “finish my order” to pick-up where they left off.
- If an error occurs when scanning or typing in a barcode:
 - Try tapping “NEXT” again.
 - Double check that the barcode numbers match the collection tube.

- Type barcode numbers manually if scanning does not work. If typing does not work, try scanning the bar code.
- If these options fail, try another kit.
- If a vial needs to be disposed of (e.g., due to error codes, dropping or damaging the vial, problems collecting enough saliva, etc.), place the blue cap onto the vial and place in a sharps container (make sure to identify where you can find a sharps container or have one available).
- If a participant does not receive results by email, instruct the participant to log in to their account at [Vault Health \(www.vaulthealth.com\)](http://www.vaulthealth.com) to view results.

Who to contact if you need support – participants and test supervisors

- For questions about the website and technology, Vault representatives are available Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. at (929) 205-6741.
- Vault can be reached for questions about tests and results at mn@vaulthealth.com or 800-800-5698.
- MDH is available to answer questions about what your test means via email at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us.

Positive tests, reporting to MDH, and close contacts

Team officials will not receive test results unless a participant shares the result voluntarily (see the section below for more details). A participant who receives a positive result and who may have been around teammates or team officials when infectious must stay away from team activities until no longer infectious. In addition, the participant should notify the team's COVID-19 Coordinator so close contacts can be identified and notified. COVID-19-positive participants must follow all isolation requirements in the team COVID-19 preparedness plan (check with your COVID-19 coordinator if you need more details) and should follow the guidance on [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).

Team COVID-19 Coordinators who learn of a potential COVID-19 case or exposure must follow the guidance in the [COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth and Adults \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportsguide.pdf) regarding reporting of known cases to MDH, identification of close contacts, and quarantine of close contacts. For more guidance, see:

- [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf)
- [Close Contacts and Tracing: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html)
- [Reporting COVID-19/SARS-CoV-2 Infections \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/report.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/hcp/report.html)

Consent for testing, test result reporting, and participant data

Consent for testing and test results.

- Participants (when able to consent to Vault's testing) and parents or guardians (for participants who are unable to consent) provide consent for testing directly to Vault, and results are reported directly

to the participant’s phone number, email, or Vault account. Teams will not receive medical information (i.e., test results) or account information from Vault.

- Teams supervising testing directly should also consider whether and how they will verify that each participant has registered and provided the necessary consent to Vault (e.g., an acknowledgement signed by a participant or, where necessary, a parent or legal guardian).

Consider your team’s role and protect participant privacy.

- Teams should be aware that test supervisors will be involved with administering a medical test and may be present to provide assistance in settings that include conversations between Vault testing professionals and participants. Teams are strongly encouraged to verify clearly with students (and, where necessary, parents and legal guardians) that they understand these issues and want team assistance before undergoing testing.
- Most sports organizations receive sensitive information on participants and parents, such as physicals, birth records, financial account numbers, and other personal information. If teams collect information that could be private (e.g., a written acknowledgement for testing with a participant’s name, or a test result voluntarily disclosed by a participant), team officials must continue to follow team or league policies for handling and collecting health and personal information, along with any federal and state legal requirements that may apply. **If teams or leagues have uncertainty about the specific legal requirements that apply to their situation, they should seek advice from legal counsel.**

COVID-19 testing for organized sports: Questions and answers

Why is weekly testing important?

Participating in organized youth sports can result in opportunities for COVID-19 to spread. Social activities surrounding sports—such as team meals and parties, and gatherings before and after sports—and the extended time periods teammates often spend together heighten the risk of one case creating a larger team outbreak. Competition can spread those cases and outbreaks to other teams, and infected participants risk transmitting the disease to members of their family and community. Frequent testing, especially in high-risk settings, is one of several key strategies to identify and stop the spread of COVID-19 at an early stage.

Where can I find more information about COVID-19 tests?

MDH offers comprehensive guidance about COVID-19 testing on its website, which sports participants and sports organizations are encouraged to review. See [COVID-19 Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html). This guidance includes:

- [Finding Testing Locations \(mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations/index.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations/index.jsp); information about MDH’s [COVID-19 Test at Home \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/athome.html) program offered in

partnership with Vault Medical Services; and information about State of Minnesota [Community Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/community.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/community.html).

- Information about different types of COVID-19 tests (molecular—including “PCR”—tests), antigen tests (“rapid tests”) and tests for past infections (“antibody tests”) at [Types of COVID-19 Tests \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/types.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/types.html).
- More details [About COVID-19 Home Tests \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/hometests.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/hometests.html). This information explains the process for COVID-19 tests that are done entirely at home and are not sent to a lab.

How accurate is the Vault saliva test?

This saliva test is just as accurate as other tests like nasal swabs, according to the test manufacturer. It tests to see whether you currently have the virus that causes COVID-19. It is not an antibody (or serology) test, which can be used to tell if you may have had the virus in the past. The FDA approved this saliva test on April 10, 2020, and the Minnesota Department of Health supports its use.

How long will the Vault saliva test take and when will I get results?

Registration and testing should take no more than 15-20 minutes. Results are typically available within 48 hours of being received at test processing laboratory sites.

Should I still play organized sports while waiting for a test result?

- Participants without symptoms or known exposure to COVID-19 can continue to participate in activities while waiting for test results. If a participant is experiencing symptoms or has been exposed to COVID-19, they should consult their health care provider as necessary and follow MDH quarantine and isolation guidance. Visit [If You Are Sick: COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html) and [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).

Does this recommendation apply to private lessons or pick-up games?

MDH currently recommends testing for anyone who is actively engaged with people outside of their household. This weekly testing guidance specifically addresses the risks of organized sports and provides resources and guidance to organized sports teams that choose to implement a testing program. Regular testing, however, is strongly recommended for all people identified on [COVID-19 Testing \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/testsites/index.html).

Should fully vaccinated participants still test weekly?

Fully vaccinated participants who are two weeks past their last dose of vaccine do not need to participate in weekly ongoing testing. However, routine testing may still be recommended in other settings. In addition, vaccinated people should still get tested if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.

For more resources on what to do after being vaccinated, visit:

- [About COVID-19 Vaccine: For fully vaccinated people \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/vaccine/basics.html#recs)
- [CDC: Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html)

Should participants still test weekly if they have been diagnosed with or tested positive for COVID-19?

Most of the time, routine testing is not recommended for people who have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days. People who work in health care settings and some other workplaces may have different guidelines. For more information, visit [What You Need to Know After Having COVID-19 \(mn.gov/covid19/about-covid/after-covid.jsp\)](http://mn.gov/covid19/about-covid/after-covid.jsp).

Can I contact MDH with questions?

For questions about COVID-19 testing for organized youth sports, contact: health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us.