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**SUBJECT: COVID-19 Physical and Sporting Activities
Spaces for Leisure, Physical and Sporting Activity and Individual Non-contact Sports Competitions**

KEY WORDS: COVID-19; Coronavirus; SARS-CoV-2; Sporting Facilities;

FOR: Sports facilities and other spaces where physical activity and sport is practised, including outdoor or indoor spaces, tracks, gyms, swimming pools, sports academies (dance, martial arts, and similar activities), massage parlours and health clubs; organization of competitive sporting events in individual, non-contact modalities.

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COVID-19 is a disease caused by infection with the novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The disease is manifested predominantly by respiratory symptoms, namely, fever, cough and difficulty breathing, and there may also be other symptoms, which include odynophagia (sore throat), generalized muscle pain, headache, weakness, and less frequently, nausea / vomiting and diarrhoea.

Based on current scientific evidence, this virus is mainly transmitted through:

- Direct contact: dissemination of respiratory droplets, produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks, which can be inhaled or land in the mouth, nose or eyes of people who are close (<2 metres).
- Indirect contact: contact of hands with a surface or object contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 and then with the mouth, nose or eyes.

For more information and recommendations see: www.covid19.min-saude.pt.

COVID-19 was considered a Pandemic on March 11, 2020 by the World Health Organisation. In Portugal, Public Health measures have been implemented in accordance with the various phases of preparation and response to epidemic situations, in order to progressively reduce transmission of the virus, providing adequate health care to all patients and safeguarding public health.

The success of public health measures depends on the collaboration of all citizens, institutions and organizations, and society. It is known that the risk of transmission increases with exposure to a large number of people, especially indoors.

The spaces where physical activity takes place, due to their characteristics, can be sites of potential transmission of SARS-CoV-2 infection, by direct and/or indirect contact. Therefore, additional measures must be taken to ensure the minimization of disease transmission in these contexts.

Thus, under the terms of paragraph a) of no. 2 of article 2 of Regulatory Decree no. 14/2012, of January 26, the Directorate-General for Health issues the following Guideline:

General measures and prior preparation

1. The spaces where physical activity takes place must ensure that all persons who work there and frequent them are aware of compliance with the rules of respiratory etiquette¹, how to wash hands correctly, as well as other measures concerning the hygiene and care of their surroundings. In addition, the importance of the following is highlighted:

In all infrastructures where physical and sports activities take place:

1. a) Develop and implement a contingency plan for COVID-19, in accordance with Decree-Law no. 24/2020 of 29 May, Article 34-B² *Risk assessment in the workplace* and ensure that all employees are aware of the measures described therein. This plan must be updated whenever necessary;
- b) Provide all employees and collaborators with information about COVID-19 and the contingency plan, especially on how to recognize and deal with a user suspected of having COVID-19;
- c) Guarantee all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)³ necessary for employees;
- d) Inform employees that they must not be present at any physical activity locations if they show signs or symptoms suggestive of COVID-19. They should contact the SNS24 Line (808 24 24 24) or other telephone lines created specifically for this purpose, and follow the instructions that are given;
- e) Post, in a manner accessible to everyone, the rules for respiratory etiquette (Appendix I), correct hand washing (Appendix II) and the facility's operating standards;
- f) All areas, materials and equipment used during physical exercise or sport shall be cleaned and disinfected pursuant to DGS Guideline no. 014/2020, particularly any items that may be shared;
- g) Provide alcohol-based antiseptic solution (ABAS) or alcohol-based solution dispensers next to the receptions, entrances and exits of bathrooms, rooms or spaces for physical activity (spaces for group sessions, rooms with equipment and machines, swimming pools and the like);
- h) The establishments must also make sure that the circulation routes are set out and be prepared to accept any restriction or limitation of persons that the local, regional or national Health Authority may determine.

¹ Information leaflets available at: <https://covid19.min-saude.pt/materiais-de-divulgacao/>

² For the purposes of Law No. 102/2009, of 10 September, in its current wording, companies prepare a contingency plan appropriate to the workplace and in accordance with the guidelines of the Directorate-General for Health and Authority for Working Conditions.

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In all places where sport is practised, including indoor facilities but also other open-air spaces such as parks, public roads or outdoors:

- a) Reinforce communication to all users about the importance and need to comply with the measures and good practices now instituted, for the prevention of transmission of SARS-CoV- 2;
- b) Ensure the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)⁴ for all human resources (sports trainers and others) who are not actually exercising;
- c) Maintain a duly authorized register of employees and users (name and telephone contact), who have frequented exercise and sporting facilities (whether indoor or open-air spaces), by date and time (entry and exit), for the purpose of possible epidemiological monitoring.

COVID-19 transmission risk reduction measures

1. Users and employees should disinfect their hands when entering and leaving facilities or other places where physical exercise and sport takes place, and after contact with surfaces in common use, using ABAS or alcohol-based solution dispensers available throughout the facility, or, in the case of training in other outdoor spaces, the technician responsible for the supervision of the session must ensure the availability of ABAS or alcohol-based solution to all participants.

Organisation of space

1. Physical distancing measures are one of the most important strategies of reducing the risk of contagion by SARS-CoV-2 in the community:

- a) Ensure that in both closed and open spaces a minimum physical distance is guaranteed of:
 - i. At least two metres between people when not performing physical exercise (reception, bar / cafeteria, circulation areas, etc.);
 - ii. At least three metres among people during physical exercise⁵⁶⁷⁸
- b) Guarantee access control to the facilities and different areas of them;
- c) Favour the use of online appointments for training and classes.

⁴ Guideline 019/2020 of 03/04/2020 “Use of Personal Protective Equipment by Non-Health Professionals”

⁵ Regarding the physical distance between people in this type of space, international recommendations (mostly issued by fitness industry associations) vary between 4 m² and 15 m², therefore being very heterogeneous. Some countries advocate the mandatory use of a mask, even during physical exercise, but there are also risks associated to this. Knowing that physical exercise implies increased respiratory rate and breathing work with increased emission of aerosolized particles in the breath, the distance between people in these spaces should be greater than that recommended for normal situations in accordance with the Principle of Precaution in Public Health.

⁶ Towards aerodynamically equivalent COVID-19 1.5 m social distancing for walking and running. Blocken B, Malizia F, van Druenen T, Marchal T. Jan 2020

⁷ Consider that the 2 metres of distancing refer to situations where individuals are walking or waiting in line. For example, in the case of running and greater distance should be adopted (between 5 and 10 metres), as with cycling (more than 20 metres).

⁸ Córdova A, Latasa I, Respiratory Flows as a Method for Safely Preventing the Coronavirus Transmission (Covid-19), *Apunts Sports Medicine* (2020)

Use of masks

1. Based on the Principle of Precaution in Public Health, the use of masks by all persons who remain in closed indoor spaces with multiple people should be considered, as a measure of additional protection to social distancing, hand washing and respiratory etiquette^{9,10}. The following is therefore recommended:

- a) Employees: the use of a mask is mandatory. The exception is while giving training sessions that involve performing physical exercise;
- b) Users and Athletes: the use of a mask is mandatory when entering and leaving the premises. Exemption from the mandatory use of a mask during physical exercise;
- c) Post, in an accessible way to everyone, the procedures for the correct use of masks, and the guidelines should be sent by e-mail in situations where there is no actual infrastructure (such as, for example, parks, public roads, outdoors etc.) (Appendix III).

Spaces and equipment for physical exercise and for massages

1. Disinfect your hands at the entrance and exit of each area;
2. Control of access to sessions must be guaranteed and clusters / waiting lines avoided;
3. Reservations should preferably be made electronically;
4. Places should be marked out (for example, markings on the floor), in order to guarantee the recommended physical distancing;
5. It may be necessary to reconfigure the different spaces for practicing physical activity, including repositioning or removing equipment or prohibiting its use;
6. Physical contact is not allowed either between technicians, employees and practitioners, or among practitioners (except in emergency situations or when the activity requires it, for example during a massage);
7. Avoid the use of equipment with porous surfaces (such as some types of mattresses, etc.).
8. In massage cubicles or rooms, the gurney and other equipment used must be disinfected and cleaned between users, in accordance with DGS Guideline 014/2020.

Personal training spaces

1. Equipment available in training spaces, such as ergometers, weight machines, free weights, gym equipment, table tennis tables, among others, must be used ensuring a distance of at least 3 metres between practitioners.
2. This equipment must be positioned facing the same way, in order to avoid a “face to face” situation with other equipment or circulation aisles, even when the 3 metres of distance is

⁹ World Health Organization. Advice on the use of masks in the context of COVID-19.

¹⁰ DGS Information No. 009/2020 of 13/04/2020 - *Use of Masks in the Community*.

guaranteed.

3. Porous surfaces such as equipment handles should be coated with adhesive film daily, at the beginning of the day (before opening) and replaced whenever visibly degraded; it should be discarded at the end of the day (after closing).

Group training sessions (e.g. group classes)

1. Group classes (in a room or pool) should operate with a reduced number of participants, in order to guarantee physical distance of at least 3 metres between participants.
2. This distance should take into account the arrangement and movements of people during the sessions, according to the type of session; that is, some group sessions, such as those dedicated to martial arts and combat sports, should be adapted accordingly.
3. It is recommended not to resume group sessions dedicated to pregnant women, the elderly, or people with chronic diseases, due to the increased risk that these segments of the population seem to present.
4. The spaces used for group training sessions should be aired and ventilated between sessions for at least 20 minutes by opening doors and windows. Mechanical ventilation (HVAC – Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) can also be used and in this case, its cleaning and maintenance must be ensured, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and the air in enclosed spaces must be renewed frequently by natural air and/or by the actual mechanical ventilation systems¹¹ (when this facility is available).
5. Ensure the cleanliness and sanitization of spaces and equipment used between sessions.

Pools and similar

1. Before reopening, when systems are reactivated, the risk assessment and control procedures should be reviewed, in accordance with applicable legislation, with measures adopted to minimize the risk of infections as a result of biofilm formation inside the pool, pipes and accessories¹².
2. The cleaning and disinfection of the pool must be carried out via the usual procedure, replacing the water and proceeding to chlorination (or other chemical disinfection) as defined in an internal protocol.
3. It is essential to ensure that water is regularly tested/analysed for correct chemistry and disinfection and that the installation is free of other chemical and microbiological risks and monitor the conformity of these parameters. The by-products of disinfection (Bromides, Chlorites, Chlorates, and Trihalomethanes) should not exceed the legally established limits and the installation should be free of any other chemical or physical risks.
4. All those technical responsible for the pool must maintain up-to-date records on the results of water quality tests. As such, disinfection mechanisms in the pool water circuit must be reinforced.

¹¹ Pursuant to Ordinance no. 353 A/2013, dated 4th December.

¹² Temporary Swimming Pool Closure Guidelines. Department of Public Health. Regional Health Administration for Lisbon and Vale do Tejo, I.P. March 23, 2020

5. Mandatory hand washing at the entrance to the pool deck.
6. Recommend that users wear swimming goggles in the pool and the surrounding area to avoid touching their eyes with their hands.
7. Ensure that the equipment used is cleaned and sanitised.

Training spaces in other outdoor spaces (e.g. parks, public roads, gardens and outdoors)

1. Training sessions that take place outdoors should favour spaces with little movement of people and ensure a physical distance of at least 3 metres between participants.
2. The correct cleaning and sanitization of equipment and materials must be guaranteed between sessions.
3. It is recommended not to resume group sessions for pregnant women, the elderly, or people with chronic diseases, due to the increased risk that these segments of the population seem to present.

Organization of Sporting Competitions in Individual Non-contact Modalities

1. A risk assessment of the competition is recommended, including such factors as the number of participants (athletes, staff, technical teams, etc.), location of the competition and distancing between athletes¹³, among other things¹⁴.
2. An explanatory manual that is specific to the competition should be drawn up (that establishes separate access routes for athletes/staff, referees/rules officials and other people, as well as phased timing that avoids large groups of athletes in the same space), stating prevention, protection and control measures adopted for the competition and other measures more specific to the competition, with a view to reducing the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2;
3. The abovementioned competition manual should be made available to all participants, preferably electronically, and to all members of the teams and rules teams, at least 72 hours before the start of the competition;
4. The public may not attend sporting events and the number of people involved in each event should be reduced to a minimum, in accordance with current legislation.
 - a) In the spaces where individual, non-contact sporting competition take place, defined circulation routes must be ensured and whenever possible, circulation should always be in one direction to avoid crossover between people;

¹³ Towards aerodynamically equivalent COVID-19 1.5 m social distancing for walking and running. Blocken B, Malizia F, van Druenen T, Marchal T. Jan 2020

¹⁴ Instructions for drawing up a Plan for Returning to High-Performance Sporting Activities – COVID-19. IPDJ. 25th May 2020.

- b) The entities organizing the competition, the athletes and technical teams must follow any restriction or limitation of access by people, as determined by the local Health Authority.

Ventilation and air renewal of closed spaces¹⁵

1. Avoid having groups of people in non-ventilated spaces.
2. Promote the aeration of all spaces, through natural or mechanical ventilation systems (ideally with six air changes per hour).
3. If the ventilation equipment is mechanical, such as air conditioning, the air intake must be directly from the outside, and the air recirculation function should not be activated. These devices must be subject to periodic cleaning and disinfection, namely filters and water tanks.

Locker rooms, showers, toilets and drinking fountains

1. The use of changing rooms is only permitted where it is possible to ensure correct conditions of physical distancing, sanitising, cleaning and disinfection as recommended in the DGS Guideline no. 014/2020.
2. As these spaces are in common use and have surfaces that are frequently touched, changing rooms should receive more frequent cleaning and sanitising than usual.
3. Cleaning, sanitising and disinfection of lockers, hangers, shower stalls and sanitary facilities after each use is recommended.
4. The use of changing rooms and showers should include the following recommendations:
 - a) If they have an alternative, users should avoid using the locker rooms/shower stalls in the facilities;
 - b) Hooks must be available that allow physical distance of two metres between users;
 - c) Showers/shower stalls must be available that allow physical distance of at least two metres between users;
 - d) The manager of the space/facility defines the maximum capacity of the locker rooms/shower rooms, so that physical distance of at least two metres between users can be maintained;
 - e) Whenever possible, the circulation routes for users and employees should follow one direction, so as to avoid crossover between people.
 - f) The hooks, lockers and showers/shower stalls that may be used should be clearly marked.

¹⁵ REHVA COVID-19 guidance document, April 3, 2020. Available at <https://www.rehva.eu/activities/covid-19guidance>

5. In situations where the use of locker rooms is restricted, users should have access to lockers (marked in such a way as to ensure physical distance of two metres) and to sanitary facilities.
6. Do not provide drinking fountains, opting instead for water dispensers where personal containers can be filled without touching the mouth of the dispenser.

Cleaning of surfaces, equipment and clothing

1. SARS-CoV-2 can survive on surfaces and objects for varying amounts of time, ranging from hours to days¹⁶. It is essential to ensure the hygiene of surfaces and clothing/linens, in order to reduce the transmission of the virus:

a) Adequate cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and the treatment of clothing made available to employees and users must be ensured, in accordance with DGS Guideline 014/2020¹⁷ and DGS Guideline 008/2020¹⁸;

b) Increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfection to several times a day and use appropriate products for all areas (e.g. service areas, counters, tables, handrails, service offices, door handles, computer keyboards, elevator buttons; bathrooms, handles, hooks, lockers, swimming pool surfaces and the like, among others);

c) Clean and disinfect non-porous washable surfaces, at the beginning of the day, before and after each use, using appropriate agents on all equipment considered critical; that is, equipment used by multiple people (such as ergometric equipment, resistance machines, free weights and the like, etc.);

d) Clean and disinfect porous surfaces such as equipment handles coated with cling film before and after each use and discard the film at the end of the day.

How to recognize a COVID-19 patient and what to do

1. Anyone, whether employee or user, who presents symptoms compatible with suspected COVID-19 (criteria mentioned at the beginning of this guidance), should be considered as a possible suspected case of COVID-19. The identified person should not leave the premises.

¹⁶ Van Doremalen, N., Bushmaker, T., Morris, D. H., Holbrook, M. G., Gamble, A., Williamson, B. N., ... & Lloyd-Smith, J. O. (2020). Aerosol and surface stability of SARS-CoV-2 as compared with SARS-CoV-1. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(16), 1564-1567.

¹⁷ DGS Guideline 014/2020 *"Cleaning and disinfection of surfaces in establishments catering to the public, and the like"*

¹⁸ DGS Guideline 008/2020 *"Prevention, control and surveillance procedures in hotels"*.

2. Each space for physical activity must have a written and operational internal contingency plan, outlining the levels of responsibility of all stakeholders, according to DGS Guideline 006/2020¹⁹;
 - a) The suspected case should wear a mask, preferably fitted by him/herself;
 - b) The suspect person/case must be taken by a single employee to the isolation room/area, by the route previously defined in the Contingency Plan, where there should be available a kit with water and some non-perishable food, alcohol-based antiseptic solution, surgical masks and, if possible, access to sanitary facilities.
 - c) Then, the SNS Line 24 (808 24 24 24) must be contacted and the instructions followed.

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Informal translation by Safe Communities Portugal for information purposes

¹⁹ Guideline 006/2020 “Procedures for prevention, control and surveillance in companies”.