

Irish Squash

COVID-19 Guidance

RETURN TO PLAY GUIDANCE
FOR CLUBS, PLAYERS & COACHES

INTRODUCTION

GETTING BACK TO PLAYING SQUASH

We all want to get back to playing squash as quickly as possible – and the Government released a new roadmap on June 19th to get Ireland back to normal life and sport over the coming weeks.

Irish Squash recommendations have been developed in accordance with World Health Organization and the Governments of Ireland & Northern Ireland Executive Public Health guidelines, and with the input of a cross section of medical, legal, coach and provincial/territorial squash associations.

Our primary concern is to ensure the safe return of the sport in the shortest timeframe possible. The nature of Squash and the confined space in which it is played mean that unlike other racket sports (particularly Tennis which is generally played outdoors) additional considerations regarding the risk of play have to be considered.

This document should be taken IN ADDITION to any safeguards in place by the club or advice given to you or your family by your doctor or other medical professional. This document is dynamic and will change as new guidance and recommendations come into force.

The guide is divided into sections for *Club managers*, *Players* and *Coaches*.

Remember the overriding goal for Squash is to ensure safe play for all participants and a safe club environment. To help achieve this goal we need everyone involved in squash to act and behave in a responsible and socially acceptable way for the good of players and their families, club staff and anyone who comes in contact with them. Please take the time to review these guidelines and implement the relevant recommendations.

Irish Squash have also established a dedicated COVID-19 email address to deal with any specific queries that arise: **COVID19@irishsquash.com**

A list of useful references is also provided to supplement our guidelines.

SQUASH SPECIFIC RISKS

Squash is viewed as a high-risk sport for the contraction of Covid-19. Medically it is viewed as equivalent to rugby, wrestling or boxing as a close-contact sport.

Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- It is played in a confined space
- As a sport for all ages, we must be mindful of those who might be more vulnerable due to their age
- In competitive play it is impossible to ensure a 2 meter gap remains between players and that no contact is made.

COMMON SENSE

At all times please follow standard advice and anyone with ONE of the following symptoms- fever, cough or who is generally unwell- should stay at home and contact their GP. If in any doubt, trust your instincts and please stay at home!

Irish Squash *return to play protocol* aligned with the Irish Government's Roadmap & Northern Ireland Executive Steps outlined as follows:

TIMELINE ROI	18th May	8th June	29th June	20th July	Aug/Sept Season starts
TIMELINE NI	28th May	June	TBC	TBC	TBC
PHASE/STEP	1	2	3	4	5
ON COURT	COURTS CLOSED	COURTS CLOSED	Individual Play on Court 'solo squash'. 2 player routines as advised by a coach with appropriate 2 metre distancing 15 min gap in between court bookings	Normal training & competitive play Group/squad Coaching as normal 10 min gap in between court bookings	Leagues/tournaments /national squads commence nationwide Gap TBC
OFF COURT	N/A	N/A	Changing rooms/shower facilities closed Social Distancing Measures to be applied off court as per public health guidance. Bar/shop open as per Government Roadmap/NI Exec	Changing rooms/shower facilities open with recommended social distancing Social Distancing Measures to be applied off court as per public health guidance. Bar/shop open as per Government Roadmap/NI Exec	Off court social distancing/COVID hygiene standards maintained as required

GUIDANCE FOR CLUBS – RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

Irish Squash are adopting the approach of a phased return to play. The material below outlines some of the many measures and precautions to take before organizing a squash activity, particularly at the outset of re-opening, as a way to reduce the risks.

We also recognise that squash clubs may operate alongside other sports facilities and a coordinated approach on premises will be required. This guidance is primarily targeting the squash-specific activities.

This is NOT a fully comprehensive list – but represents a **MINIMUM** guide for complying with Government restrictions. Please familiarise yourselves with information from HSE, HSA, NSAI relevant to COVID-19 (see references).

NECESSARY CHANGES WITHIN THE CLUB

Ahead of Opening:

You should appoint a **Covid-19 Officer and/or Committee** to oversee these requirements and we recommend that they liaise with Irish Squash with any queries. Please share the lead person's name, mobile number and email address with the club members and Irish Squash (COVID19@irishsquash.com). Circulate your facility's COVID-19 measures to your members and staff.

Check with your liability insurance provider to learn if it has any requirements that must be met as a condition of its provision of insurance coverage upon re-opening.

The question of liability waivers may arise. Even though liability waivers are routine and well-known, it is unclear whether a COVID-19 waiver relieving a service provider of liability for exposure claims would be enforceable. This is at the sole discretion of the club or facility.

You will need to communicate clearly with players the permitted use of the facilities following these guidelines.

Off Court Activity:

- Ensure only minimum staff/volunteer personnel are onsite
- Display Covid-19 operational posters throughout the facility (see references for information)
- Provide floor markings within the facility for distancing/Perspex screens at reception
- Online court booking system is essential and should be monitored by COVID-19 team to ensure compliance with guidelines
- Review court booking policy and aim to optimise schedule so that number of players in the club at any one time is kept to a minimum (eg. 30/40/45 minute slots, staggered starting times if >1 court available)
- Only players with prior court booking permitted onsite
- Consider the maximum number of players that will be permitted in the club/squash court area at any time
- Sign-in/sign-out sheet for any person entering/leaving the club premises (if CCTV or ID swipe card system in place, sign in/out sheets may not be necessary)
- Consider designated times for court access for members who may be identified as at increased risk with respect to COVID-19 infection (but who are not required to 'cocoon')
- Hand-sanitiser should be available at entrance to club/reception and in court area.

- Remove water fountains and loose furniture from outside the squash courts
- Close off any common areas where players are likely to gather.
- Keep windows open in order to promote good ventilation where possible, especially near squash courts
- Use of shower and changing rooms will be off-limits in Phase 3, re-opening with relevant social distancing in Phase 4
- Toilet & handwashing facility must be available
- Ensure appropriate PPE is available to anyone cleaning the facilities (gloves / masks / plastic apron).
- Ensure staff are trained in the correct use of PPE.
- There must be daily thorough cleaning of club premises, including squash court and side-walls (to hand height) & floors using suitable disinfectant
- Place play-related restrictions on/near the door of each squash court – including prohibiting any wiping of sweat from hands on any court wall and sharing of equipment.
- Provide disinfectant wipes outside each court for cleaning of touch points (door handles, walls, visibly moist spots on court floor etc) and a bin for disposal of used wipes
- Review your health and safety processes –ensure correct contact information and procedures are in place
- Stop the use of a ANY communal equipment (rackets / balls / cones etc.) and do not rent or lend any items to players
- Liaise with any coach who works in the club in carrying out their risk assessment prior to re-starting lessons
- **Create disciplinary rules** for anyone in breach of the club rules regarding Covid-19 safety

Anyone who develops symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 whilst on the club premises should return home immediately (not using public transport) and seek appropriate medical attention. A member of staff or another member should be informed so that relevant areas of the club can be cleaned and disinfected.

In the event of an outbreak of COVID-19 in the club, liaise with public health officials for appropriate guidance.

ON COURT ACTIVITY:

Phase 1 and 2

- Squash courts remain closed to players & coaches

Phase 3

- 'Solo' squash i.e. one player per court
- 2 player routines also permitted with on-court social distancing, as advised by a coach
- Consider limiting training to same playing partner only
- 2 members of same household do not need to observe social distancing on court
- Interval of 15 minutes in between court bookings to permit players to clean 'touch points' (e.g. court door handles) and floor (visibly moist areas) with disinfectant wipes
- Players to arrive in their squash gear maximum 10 minutes before court time booked and to leave no later than 15 minutes after play finishes/court cleaning completed
- Players only allowed to use their own racket and ball; must bring own water bottle and hand towel
- Players may avail of coaching, provided coach & player maintain appropriate social distancing (coach outside court/at back of court/on balcony) – maximum 2 players on court
- No match play or competitions permitted

Phase 4

- Match play permitted
- Group coaching re-starts
- 10 minute interval in between court booking times
- Changing rooms accessible, limited numbers to ensure social distancing

Start of Season

- Leagues and competitions are played with off-court social distancing/COVID-19 hygiene measures as required

COMMUNICATING WITH PLAYERS

- Anyone unwell **must stay at home.**
- Anyone developing symptoms suggestive of COVID19 within 48 hours of playing squash/being in the club must notify the COVID officer/committee as soon as possible to facilitate contact tracing
- Any player/coach who has recovered from COVID19 infection (where symptoms lasted >3 weeks or required hospitalisation) should **consult with their GP** before returning to squash.
- Anyone deemed to be in an at-risk group for COVID-19 infection should check with their GP before returning to play squash and if fit to do so, should liaise with the club to access court booking at designated times (when club is less busy)

GUIDANCE FOR PLAYERS - RETURN TO PLAY PROTOCOL

We are all keen to get back on court – please adhere to these guidelines which have been drawn up to ensure the safest possible environment for you and your fellow squash players.

Please refer also to the general COVID-19 guidelines for clubs for additional information.

GETTING READY TO PLAY

- You should **stay at home** if you or anyone in your family has been in contact with someone with Covid-19.
- If you are unwell, you should stay at home.
- Clubs may require you to sign a waiver.
- Online booking of courts in advance of play is essential - no “turning up” at the club unannounced
- Social distancing must be fully observed at all times at the club
- Wash your hands carefully with soap and water or use hand sanitizer on arrival at the club and when leaving
- Sign-in on arrival at the club and sign-out when leaving
- Go straight to the court on arrival
- Bring your own water bottle and small towel
- Use hand sanitiser provided at court area before and after play
- **Always observe cough/sneeze hygiene measures**
- **Do not touch your face with your hands**
- Consider use of wrist/head sweatbands when playing to reduce need to touch your face
- Do not wipe your hands on the wall of the court

Phase 1 & 2

- No squash courts open

After an extended break from playing squash, you may be unfit, so plan a gradual return to play once courts re-open!

Phase 3

- 2 players can practice/train on court at this stage or you may practice solo.
- Consider limiting training to same playing partner only
- 2 members of same household do not need to observe social distancing on court
- You should arrive at the club in your gear ready to play (the changing rooms are out of bounds) 10 minutes before you are due on court.
- Clean court door handle with disinfectant wipe before entry onto court (unless you have witnessed this task done by another person just before you play)
- Only use your own racket and ball
- Try to avoid touching the ball with your hands in between rallies
- Clean court door handle with disinfectant wipe before entry onto court (unless you have witnessed this task done by another person just before you play)
- For solo practice, consider leaving court door open (if safe to do so) to promote good ventilation on court whilst you train/practice
- Interval of 15 minutes in between court bookings

- Juniors should have a parent or guardian present outside of the court area
- Leave club after training session and ‘touch point’ cleaning completed (see details below)
- Coaching sessions permitted (observing social distancing rules) – maximum 2 players per court
- No match play or competitions permitted

Phase 4

- Match play permitted
- Group coaching re-starts
- No shaking of hands with other players, fist bumps, “patting on the back” or other unnecessary physical contact. Consider racket tap or nod.
- 10 minute interval in between court booking times
- Cleaning of touch points before & after court use (as in Phase 3)
- Changing rooms accessible, limited numbers to ensure social distancing

Start of Season

- Leagues and competitions are played with off-court social distancing/COVID-19 hygiene measures as required

AFTER YOU HAVE PLAYED

In order to keep the courts safe for the next player:

- After playing you must help clean the court (including wiping door handles, visibly moist spots on the floor and the area around your sports bag and anywhere you touched - on and off court).
- Dispose of disinfectant wipes in bin provided outside court
- Use hand-sanitiser to clean your hands after this process.
- Take away all of your equipment.
- Clean your equipment regularly, including rackets and water bottles.
- Leave the court immediately after play is finished and leave the facility immediately after play.
- On arrival home put your sports clothes into the wash.

Players are advised to adhere to these guidelines to ensure a safe playing environment for all – failure to do so will be dealt with through the club’s disciplinary procedures.

GUIDANCE FOR COACHES

COACHING – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

As a coach you have a special responsibility in ensuring safety and well-being of players in your club and under your guidance. As well as the usual safety considerations there are now a great deal of additional precautions that you need to consider when considering coaching in your club.

- Ensure you have permission from the club to carry out coaching and you are familiar with their policies.
- Before coaching, as usual, please carry out a full **RISK ASSESSMENT** and talk to your club about how lessons can be delivered safely. Consider the corridor area, court and balcony, age and health profile of your client.
- Ensure courts are booked with the names of your clients and your name for contact tracing purposes
- Consider using tape rather than cones etc. as these would need to be cleaned after each session.
- Ensure you have access to hand sanitiser and disposable paper towels.
- Confirm the health status (i.e. COVID-19 negative) of your client and their family prior to meeting them in the club by phone or e-mail.

You will need to communicate clearly the expected behaviour on and off court regarding social distancing and contact with equipment and the court area (walls, floor, door and handles).

BEFORE THE LESSON

Phase 1 & 2

- No on-court coaching permitted

Phase 3

- One or two players may be on court at any one time – for juniors, a parent / guardian should be at a safe distance outside the court or on the balcony.
- You should operate outside of the court where possible, maintain safe social distancing when on court
- Your client(s) should arrive and depart as close as possible to the start time and be ready in their gear.
- You should use a new ball that will be handled just by the player for each session, or use a ball that is cleaned using disinfectant wipe before the lesson starts

Phase 4

- Group coaching re-starts
- Match play permitted
- Maintain social distancing as far as possible both on and off court

Start of Season

- Attend competitions/squads with players with social distancing and COVID19 hygiene standards maintained

DURING THE LESSON

- Parent/guardian must remain outside the court or on a balcony and maintain social distancing.
- Don't allow players to touch any shared equipment
- Try to avoid touching the ball with your hands during a coaching session.
- Do not touch your face with your hands
- Maintain appropriate physical distancing at all times – including when giving feedback or while players are recovering.
- Any poor or inappropriate behaviour must be dealt with immediately in a polite fashion and if it is not stopped the session must be abandoned and the player sanctioned.
- Beware of any area touched by the player. Discourage any touching of the wall (hand drying, wiping) etc

AFTER THE LESSON

- Both you and your client(s) should use hand-sanitiser immediately after the lesson.
- If you provided any equipment for the player it must properly disinfected after use (e.g. cleaned and a new grip on a racket)
- Observe the booking time intervals
- The player(s) and/or you should clean the court and remove any sweat from the floor and walls and sanitise the door handle and any other areas.
- Avoid payments by cash if possible.

USEFUL LINKS/REFERENCES

This document has been prepared referencing best available information at time of publication available from the Irish and International health and sporting bodies. It is subject to ongoing change as information and best practice emerges and changes.

The following links will provide additional guidance and references for those interested in further information.

- World Health Organisation – WHO <https://www.who.int>
- World Squash Federation – WSF - <http://www.worldsquash.org/getting-back-to-squash-wsf-announces-recommendations-post-covid-19/>
- Health Service Executive - <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>
- Health & Safety Authority - <http://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/>
- NSAI – National Standards Authority of Ireland - <https://www.n sai.ie/covid-19workplaceprotection/>
- UK HSE - <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>
- NHS UK <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Download for useful COVID-19 Posters and Resources:

- <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/news/newsfeatures/covid19-updates/partner-resources/>