



RETURN TO WRESTLING AFTER COVID-19

Guidance for Wrestlers - Training - Coaches

These guidelines are intended to assist the Wrestling community to implement safety measures to regain wrestling activity when allowed, whether as athletes, coaches, event organizers or other participants. They may be used as a **checklist** and are not exhaustive. They are **additional** to all sanitary requirements as **prescribed by public authorities** and the advice of doctors and sports physicians.

Wrestling being a contact sport, it is at **higher risk** of viral transmission during viral epidemic and pandemic periods. Hence a **higher degree of attention** and more stringent measures are required from the Wrestling community. Individual **responsibility** is also key to protect the health of everyone. In that respect, detection of infected people and virus carriers with no symptoms help reducing those risks. In case of any doubt by an athlete or a participant for a potential viral infection, it is his/her individual responsibility to consider self-quarantine, refrain from participating in sports activities (training, competition) and refer to a hospital or an officially designated centre by the authorities.

This document is a recommendation and is subject to changes depending on the evolution of the pandemic and the progress made by the scientific community with regards to diagnostic approaches and antiviral treatments and vaccine.

Please consult regularly the recommendations of the

[World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019)

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1. General sanitary advice¹

1. Continue to follow and comply with all orders and guidelines promulgated by your national authorities.
2. Keep updated on the latest information from trusted sources, such as WHO or your local and national health authorities
3. Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water frequently.
4. Avoid going to crowded places unnecessarily. Maintain at least 2 metre (6 feet) distance between yourself and others whenever possible.
5. Avoid shaking hands, hugging and unnecessary physical contacts.
6. Wearing mask and proper protections when necessary (PPE - Personal protective equipment).
7. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.

¹ Based on WHO's advice : <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>



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8. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately and wash your hands.
9. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention, but call by telephone in advance if possible and follow the directions of your local health authority.
→ Any significant increase in the number or **efforts for breathing** should be taken seriously.
10. **Daily monitoring of the heart-rate rest (HRR)**, the number of your heart beats during one minute when you wake up before starting any activity, is a good way to monitor your body and become aware of a potential infection.
→ Sudden **increase** in HRR may be an early **indicator** of a potential infection at early stages, even before clinical symptoms appear.
11. Boost your immune system by **proper nutrition** and **avoiding overtraining**. Immune system deficiency increases the risk of viral infection.

2. Advice for Wrestlers

In addition to the measures imposed by public authorities on fitness and training canter, and those described above, the following recommendations specific to Wrestling should be applied:

1. Training **outdoors** whenever possible should be privileged.
2. When possible, wrestle **only with the one and same sparring partner** on the mat until further notice.
3. **Take shower before and after** each training applying always shampoo and soap.
4. **Mats:**
→ **Clean your shoes** before stepping on the mat. Strictly enforce this rule during the pandemic
→ Make sure that the **mats** are regularly **sanitized**
5. **Equipment:**
→ **Sanitize** Suples dummies/Bulgarian bags /Ropes & Resistance bands /other strength & conditioning equipment
→ It is the **responsibility of each athlete to sanitize** the training equipment after use.
→ Only **one athlete** must use **one specific equipment** at a time
6. The availability of fitness and training equipment may be reduced so that regular sanitization is more easily controlled.
7. Unnecessary premises or social spaces should be closed to avoid gatherings.
8. Clearly separate and identify your **personal belongings** (bottles of water, snack, towel, etc.).
9. A **daily track record** of all users of your training facilities should be kept.



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10. Be attentive to any **fever, cough or difficulty breathing and increasing heart rate**. Check your temperature and heart rate (at least twice daily, but not right after a training session to avoid “false high temperature”) and document your temperature and heart rate at resting position (heart rate rest).

→ Any sudden increase in regular body temperature or heart rate rest should be taken seriously.

3. Advice for resuming training

1. **Resumption in training:** must begin with a **thorough preparation phase of sufficient duration**.

Initially, the focus is on general preparation activities at appropriate levels of volume with gradually increasing specific training of greater intensity.

→ Excessive volume, insufficient progression, and a sudden increase in the training intensity can negatively impact the wrestlers’ assimilation capacity and could result in overload injury.

2. Recommended time for returning to **full training** without a high risk of injury is estimated to be **3-5 weeks**
3. Separate **external, long-term goals** (participation in a world championship), from **short-term, internal goals** (increasing muscular power, improving body composition, or mastering a new technique) when planning your training.
4. Stick to your training plan for the next event. Train like competitions are still going to happen.

4. Advice for Coaches

1. Ensure all **hygiene protocols** are respected and repeat the instructions regularly. Encourage the creation of routines for athletes.

→ Wrestlers will feel that you take care about them and that they train in a healthy environment

2. **Keep a track record** of all wrestlers attending the training sessions (date, names, etc.).

3. **Gamify:** organize “physical games” (preferably outdoors)

→ Keep the motivation and sense of competition high

4. A Priority: to **assess physical capacities** when wrestlers return to team facilities in order to appropriately assess the damage and evaluate injury risk on an individual basis

5. Be aware that **your decisions** can have health **consequences** such as increasing risk of diseases and injuries:

The **lower load** because of confinement: will result in the detraining of certain structures and systems.

→ can lead to an increased chance for injury.

Excessive loading upon resumption of training can also lead to overuse injuries and overtraining syndrome.

6. **Do not share the names of sick athletes** unless there is a compelling justification (requested by health authorities, for medical reasons, ...). Ensure privacy rules are respected.



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Scientific Commission

7. Exposed wrestler / individuals should contact local healthcare services for direction on further care.
8. **Listen and communicate** with your athletes! Try to understand their concerns and support them.

5. Psychological aspects to consider

1. Keep in mind COVID-19 is a **global challenge** affecting all nations.
2. Stress, anxiety & uncertainty are susceptible consequences of the instability created by the pandemic.
3. Lack of sleep, poor or over nutrition & non-planned exercise may result in sport injuries and diseases.
4. Coaches & sport psychologists should intervene at both the individual and team levels to ascertain the level of anxiety and psychological strain.
5. Reduced capacity to train → Impacts on “athletic identity” (= refers to the extent to which an individual identifies with their role as an athlete). Feelings of loss, identity crisis and distress.
 - **Social support** is important when athletic identity is damaged.
6. Before returning to team training: meetings with the coach and / or sports psychologist is suggested (to discuss any questions, concerns and peculiarities the athlete has).
7. Coaches should give continuous **reminders** to the athletes of the initial **reasons for engaging in the sport**: fun, friendship, healthy competition, and creating a healthy body.
8. Sports psychologists can improve mental and even physical fitness of athletes by applying different sports psychological techniques such as:
 - Anxiety or Energy Management,
 - Attention and Concentration Control (focusing),
 - Communication,
 - Goal Setting,
 - Imagery, Visualization, Mental Practice,
 - Self-talk, etc.
9. **Reviewing wrestling competition clips can encourage wrestlers and improves their mental preparation.** Help athletes come back to the present, using breathing and cues to come back to center.
10. Stick to your training plan for the next event. Train like competitions are still going to happen.

6. Other considerations

If you plan training in altitude, be cautious:

- Athletes will face physiological adaptations to altitude, and hypoxia-induced stress on the pulmonary, cardiovascular, renal and immune systems that may be exacerbated by prior exposure to COVID-19.
- Early symptoms of maladaptation to hypoxia, and **respiratory problems**: to be considered with **attention** as they can mask COVID-19 symptoms.



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Risks groups:

- Wrestlers with history of **previous injuries or illness**: risk of re-injury.
- Wrestlers who had a **COVID-19 infection**: due to possible long-term effects on respiratory and cardiovascular system -> may result in a reduced ability to train effectively on return.

This document has been prepared in collaboration with the UWW Medical Commission and the UWW Scientific Commission.