

IMMUNITY AND TRAINING

During COVID-19 Pandemic
Performance Athletes



For athletes, maintaining fitness is a key priority over the coming months. Adaptation will need to be made around training methods and volumes to maintain fitness and to sustain a healthy immune system. Our immune system is our defence against infection and there are many simple steps everyone can follow to ensure they remain as strong and healthy as possible.

HYGIENE

- Follow the Government [social distancing rules](#) closely.
- [Wash your hands](#) regularly with soap and water for 20 seconds
- If you develop symptoms follow the [self isolation](#) advice to protect others

NUTRITION

- Eat a well balanced diet that includes all major food groups and avoid chronic low energy availability
- Match energy intake and output. Fuel well for each training session and have a high quality recovery snack
- Eat at least half of your energy from carbohydrate and include quality protein at each meal
- Eat a wide range of fruit and vegetables daily. These contain polyphenols and flavonoids which have an essential role in respiratory immune function.
- Consider consuming a probiotic drink daily (Yakult or Actimel)
- Keep well hydrated, keep your water bottle clean and do not share with others
- Consider taking additional Vitamin D from autumn to spring
- Consider additional Zinc and Vitamin C at the onset of cold symptoms as there is evidence this reduces the length and severity

SLEEP

- Good quality and volume of sleep is hugely important in maintaining immunity and wellbeing.
- Poor sleep is strongly associated with reduced immunity and low wellbeing.
- Aim for at least 8 hours of sleep per night
- Reinforce or develop a [sleep hygiene strategy](#).
- Despite the disruption in routine maintain the same sleep and wake times
- If you are struggling with your sleep you can access [Sleepio](#) for guided self help.

MENTAL STRESS

- High levels of mental stress are associated with a reduction of immunity and susceptibility to infection.
- Some distress and uncertainty is normal
- Keeping connected with others and seeking updates from [credible sources](#) will help with this
- Be proactive in your plan to protect your mental wellness. Consider a [personal wellness plan](#)
- Please refer to the Looking After Wellbeing Sportscotland information sheet for more detailed information



MEDICAL CONDITIONS

- If you have any regular medical conditions ensure you are following government guidelines closely
- Remember to take all medications as prescribed
- Ensure you have enough in stock medication
- You should be registered with a local GP
- If you have asthma or diabetes please refer to the information sheets on these conditions for more details.

WHAT IF I GET SYMPTOMS?

- You need to self isolate in your home for 7 days
- Everyone in your household will need to stay in the house for 14 days.
- You don't need to contact 111 to tell them you are staying at home **unless you are high risk and are shielding.**
- Stay hydrated and try and maintain a well balanced diet
- If your COVID-19 symptoms don't go away after 7 days, or get worse, or you are having difficulty breathing, call 111 for advice or 999 if you need emergency care

WHAT IF SOMEONE IN MY HOUSE GETS SYMPTOMS?

- You, and everyone else in your household, need to stay at home for 14 days from the time the first person in your household got symptoms.
- If you get symptoms of COVID-19, you need to stay at home for at least 7 days, even if that takes you past the end of the 14 days you have already been at home.

WHO SHOULD I TALK TO?

- If you need guidance on appropriate training please discuss with your coach, physical preparation coach and performance physiologist
- If you are currently injured and undergoing rehabilitation discuss with your physiotherapist.
- Inform the medical team if you develop symptoms consistent with coronavirus
- Stay connected to others and follow the guidance on the maintaining mental wellness document

FUTHER INFORMATION

- [Recovery advice](#)
- [Advice on Vitamin D](#)
- [Maintaining a healthy immune system in athletes](#)
- [Sleep advice](#)
- [SportScotland Athlete information page](#)

This information sheet is intended as guidance for athletes and sports. **If you are concerned about your health please seek advice from your usual healthcare practitioner**

CONTINUING TO TRAIN

- If you are symptom free continuing to train is important to maintain fitness, wellbeing and immune function.
- Depending on your sport there may have to be significant changes to how you train.
- The focus may move to more generic training but with elements of lower volume sport specific work
- Due to these changes in training style its important you work closely with your high performance team to reduce the potential for injury and illness.

WHAT CHANGES IN TRAINING DO I NEED TO MAKE?

- There are a lot of excellent online resources available but training load needs to be monitored carefully. Continue to use your normal training load and wellbeing monitoring tools
- It is recommended that all training is guided by your high performance team and sports coach
- Consider replacing lengthy training session with more frequent spike sessions with recovery/adaptation every 2nd/3rd week
- Unaccustomed and frequent high intensity training may suppress your immune system
- Consider a reduction in overall workload by 10-15% per session
- If repeated high intensity bursts are part of a training session consideration should be made to keep the intensity down by 10-15% of maximim effort and perform an overall lower volume of session
- Increasing maximum intensity of sessions should not be considered over this time period.
- Please work with your sports coach to agree on the best adaptations and try and optimise recovery

CAN I TRAIN IF I HAVE SYMPTOMS?

- Training too soon in the course of the illness could have longer term impacts on heart and lung health
- If you develop symptoms consistent with coronavirus (or have been diagnosed with coronavirus after being tested) you should refrain from exercise for a **minimum of 10 days** even if your symptoms are mild.
- If your symptoms have settled at 10 days the medical team will guide you through a graduated return to training plan.
- The **minimum** length of time to get back to full training will be 17 days.
- Your physical preparation coach (and where needed your physiotherapist) will help develop your training programme
- Stay connected to others and follow the guidance on the Maintaining Wellness information sheet.

