

July 2020 - As we explore the meaning of Phase 2, we are learning how to live with the restrictions to help keep us safe. HCPA has updated this COVID-19 Return to Play Protocol to reflect what we have learned and adopted over the last few months.

First, a bit of a reality check:

- The “Stay at Home” recommendation has not been changed by Howard County.
- There are still to be no gatherings of more than 10 people. HCPA understands that this applies to each court and not the overall facility.
- Social distancing is still expected and masks are highly recommended.
- Vulnerable individuals with serious underlying health conditions should not be playing.

What does this mean for you, our association and access to pickleball?

First and foremost, **PLAY AT YOUR OWN RISK. Pickleball has not been deemed a “safe” activity, only a “less risky” activity.**

If we blatantly disregard the government guidelines and have large groups congregating, we risk jeopardizing our access to the courts at all. Please keep this in mind and don't ruin it for everyone by ignoring the guidelines.

The HCPA Return to Play Protocol if you choose to play:

Based on the feedback we have received from our survey, the USAPA COVID-19 guidelines and our primary objective being the safety of our members, our association has decided to enact the following return to play protocol.

- HCPA will support open play various locations with some based on skill levels. Location, days and times will be posted to the website under Organized Play.
- Our organized open play sessions are dependent on the availability of the courts. HCPA assumes the courts are unlocked and that there are no other independent players occupying the courts. Note, these are public courts and we have no way to reserve these courts for our association use since it is first come/first serve.
- The online registration application (Doodle) will request a full name and an email address. This information will be available for contact tracing if necessary.
- If you have family and friends you intend to play with, have each player use the registration application for the location and time.
- If a player is unable to attend, please put the cursor on your name, click on the pencil icon and then click on the trash can icon to remove your name. If you are having problems doing this, let Earl Sneeringer know.
- **The wearing of masks is suggested when players are coming to the site, waiting for a court and leaving the site.** There is no requirement to wear a mask during play time.
- The wearing of gloves will be at the discretion of each player. It is recommended that each player sanitize their hands and balls after the game.
- Each person should bring their own hand sanitizer to be used after play. The same sanitizer can be used on each person's ball as well. HCPA will not be supplying hand sanitizer.
- Folks that are waiting for court time should support social distancing and wear masks for the safety of everyone.
- HCPA will NOT SUPPLY BALLS, all players should have at least two well marked balls in their possession when coming onto the court.
- To minimize contact with other players, HCPA discourages and requests the elimination of post game contact with other players such as hand bump, handshake or paddle touch.
- Members are requested to take their temperatures prior to coming and to decline to play if any symptoms are present. As a courtesy to other members, don't play if you don't feel well.
- To eliminate common touch points:

- HCPA will not use a common water jug, bring your own water bottle
- HCPA will not supply hand sanitizer
- HCPA will keep gates open so no one has to touch them. Balls may need to be run down outside the courts.
- After the setup and take down of nets, HCPA recommends hand sanitizing.
- If a player becomes infected with the COVID-19 virus, please notify one of our board members or the session coordinators with the date and time you played in the last week so we can relay this information to all participants for contact tracing.

As more restrictions are lifted, we will adjust our procedures as appropriate and keep you informed. The HCPA Protocol that the board has established may be a little inconvenient but it is done for the safety of all participants. Please **be patient** with the HCPA board of directors, open play coordinators and volunteers as we try to implement these new changes. As we learn what works and what doesn't we will attempt to adjust them accordingly.

Because we know that there will be ongoing questions and concerns, we are setting up a **COVID-19 Q & A - DISCUSSION FORUM** on our website at howardcountypickleball.org. On the home page, you will find a COVID-19 menu item under which you will have access to this forum. ***Please use that page for specific questions and concerns.*** Your questions may be in the minds of many others and it would be helpful to have a public space for our members to have these discussions. Your board will be monitoring the forum and helping to respond to your questions. It will also help us check on how it's going out there.

YOUR ROLE RIGHT NOW is to help each other stay safe, healthy, and to help "manage" this the right way for everyone. **Remember: we are a non-profit, all volunteer association. We do not have a paid staff to police this and we do not own our own courts over which we have control. With your help, we will all get through this together.**

Board of Directors
Howard County Pickleball Association