

Individual Activity Guidelines

26 06 2020

Introduction

On 23 March 2020, the UK government put the country into lockdown to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the population.

This action resulted in the cancellation or postponement of triathlon events, and significant limitations on the way athletes can train.

Whilst many activities are now returning, it is clear that there will be some long-term restrictions that will have an impact on your swim, bike, run activities.

We do not yet know how long these will remain for or how they will be lifted, so this document aims to guide amateur triathletes to help you train safely and effectively as life returns to normal. Guidance for elite athletes will be available via the relevant performance team.

This document is accurate as of 26 June 2020 and is split into national guidelines when differences occur in the rules and regulations.

What can you do now?

General Guidelines

You can take whatever outdoor exercise that you like but please be mindful of government restrictions:

In England, you may exercise in groups of up to six people outdoors. In addition, two households can meet regardless of size. You should remain two metres apart where it is possible to do so. Where it is not, you should keep a social distance of 'one metre plus', meaning you should remain one metre apart, while taking mitigations to reduce the risk of transmission.

In Scotland, you may exercise with your own or up to two other households per day outdoors, up to a maximum of 8 people at any one time. You must stay at least

two metres away from other participants including during participation, when taking breaks and before and after participation. You are advised to 'stay local; stay safe' and exercise in your local area (broadly 5 miles) avoiding unnecessary travel. Read the up to date [travel guidance](#).

In Wales, you may exercise with your own or up to one other households per day outdoors. You are advised to exercise in your local area (broadly 5 miles) avoiding unnecessary travel.

Pool Swimming

England  Scotland  Wales 

Public pools are currently closed nationwide preventing the majority of you from pool training.

If you have your own pool to use, it is important to remember these key considerations:

- Pacing in Endless pools will be different from that in a normal pool or within an open water environment. You will need to reduce the amount of time spent in the water compared to normal to replicate your normal workload.
- The temperature of your pool may be different (i.e. warmer or cooler) than what you are used to. If you are new to swimming in this pool, take it easy for the first few sessions to work out how you are adjusting to the new conditions.
- Don't be tempted to use a tether system (for example if you have a smaller pool), these have safety implications which could lead to an emergency occurring.

Open Water Swimming

England  Scotland  Wales 

Open water swimming venues are now open. Before taking part in any open water swimming activity, it is advisable to read the COVID-19 guidance to open water swimmers available on the [SH2OUT website](#).

Bike

England  Scotland  Wales 

The current rules put no restrictions on the length of time you can exercise outside you can exercise as often as you like

Please be mindful of other members of the public while cycling and maintain social distancing.

Some research indicates that for cyclists (given your increased work of breathing and distance traveled during each breath) that a distance of 20m is more appropriate.

When training indoors, spend 25% less time on your bike than you would have done outdoors to recreate the normal amount of effort you put into a session. The lack of freewheeling or cruising time indoors makes your session harder than on most outdoor rides.

Run

England  Scotland  Wales 

As per cycling, you are permitted to exercise as often as you like.

Remember to socially distance. Research for running shows that distances of up to 10 meters may be required based on your speed and breathing rate.

Similar to indoor cycling, treadmill running can result in a harder effort to achieve the equivalent distance outside. As a result, you may need to reduce the time spent on a treadmill run compared to a similar session that would have been outdoors.

Strength and Conditioning (S&C)

S&C should ideally already be an integral part of your usual triathlon training, to both improve performance and reduce your risk of injury.

You may find that access to your usual training venues and/or equipment is still restricted.

By being creative, you may be able to replicate some of your usual programs in your home environment. Many free resources online provide information and ideas on home training.

BTF also has resources online which may be of use to you:

[View them here.](#)

When trying something new, or modifying an existing exercise be mindful of your technique. Exercises performed incorrectly may lead to injury and while using a mirror can be helpful but if something feels wrong, don't do it.

If S&C is new to you, start with simple exercises with low weights. While now is an ideal time to add in this key part of your training, it is important to build up slowly as you would with any new activity.

Overtraining and Injury Prevention

Some of you will have more time on your hands than usual. While this provides an excellent opportunity to focus more on your triathlon training, it is important to build up slowly to reduce the known risks of developing injuries or illnesses.

Athletes often apply a 10% rule to their training programs. For example, if you are going for a run which is normally 5km and you want to step up your training, increase it to a distance of 5.25km (i.e. 10% longer) but keep it the same in terms of speed and terrain. Or keep the run at a 5km distance but aim to run a time that is 10% faster than usual.

If the majority of your training is usually done on flat or easy terrain and you now have access to or are forced to use different routes, it is a great way to add diversity to your program. It is important to be mindful that hills and/or uneven surfaces put different stresses on your body that you will not be used to. Make sure that you add in these different routes in a gradual fashion, e.g. initially once a week or as a small part of a normal terrain run.

General Health Advice

Maintaining good hygiene is more important now than ever and will continue to be critical in preventing the spread of the virus. Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap (or use an alcohol hand gel of over 60%) and avoid touching your face to reduce virus transmission.

Anti-inflammatory medications (eg ibuprofen aka Neurofen, Diclofenac aka Volterol, etc) are not advised for pain management of injuries until 48 hours after the injury occurred as they delay healing. For the same reasons, they are not advised at any time during the healing process of a fracture. It is advised that anti-inflammatory medications should not be taken during the current outbreak unless advised by a doctor.

Maintain a healthy balanced diet, with oily fish and plenty of fruit and vegetables to help boost your immune system.

If you have had to reduce the time you spend outside for any reason, consider taking vitamin D supplements to maintain these levels.



COVID-19

Currently, it is unknown how COVID-19 affects the body after the person has recovered.

If you think you are infected now – do not train and let your body recover. Sleeping, eating, and drinking are the most important things you can do at this time.

If you were the first person to be affected in your household, you must isolate for a minimum of 7 days (longer if you still have symptoms).

If anyone in your household is affected, you must isolate for a minimum of 14 days even if you feel entirely well. This period may be longer if you still have symptoms at 14 days.

Once you feel entirely back to your normal self, you may begin (slowly) to exercise again after some time. There is currently no set recommended time period, but increasingly people feel that at least 2 weeks is required to allow the body enough of a recovery to return to any form of training.

Once you begin to train again, keep your sessions short and light with rest days in between. If things appear to be going well, increase the load slowly. If you don't feel right then stop, it is probably too early to return. If your ability to train continues to be affected, seek medical advice.

Post Lockdown

As we are returning to a more normal way of life in various forms, there will be the obvious temptation to return to normal training schedules. Some of these temptations may remain curbed by the on-going closures or restrictions of access to gyms and pools etc, however the opportunity to go on long runs or rides may be available to you.

It is vital that athletes undergo a transition period from their lockdown training program back to their normal activities. For some, this transition will be quick if they have remained well and managed to maintain a lot of their prior program, but for others, the process will be slower.

For the majority, the aim is to return to competition, but this process should not be rushed. When athletes sign up to events, they should consider the following 4 questions:

- Do I have enough time to train properly for this event?
- Should I start with a shorter distance than usual?
- Will the water temperature at that time of year be something I am used to?
- Have I got any potential health problems post COVID-19 that I should get checked out first?

If in doubt, then it is advisable to delay your return to competition until you are ready.

Competitions and Events

Competitions and events will make changes in how they are delivered in the short to medium term. These are likely to include time trial formats as opposed to mass race starts and a reduction in the number of competitors in each event. It is important that you check with the event organisers before you enter to ensure that the new formats are appropriate for your levels of fitness and ability.

Health Screening

Currently it is unknown what impact COVID-19 will have on the long-term health of those who contracted the virus.

Based on the best available evidence at this time, it is strongly advised that those who were hospitalised should undergo a form of health screening prior to taking part in a triathlon. This screening is best led by a doctor with specialist training in Sports Medicine however other doctors may feel competent to make decisions on the participants fitness to compete and to decide any appropriate investigations that might be required.


For those who were not hospitalised due to COVID-19 at any time, it is still recommended to undergo a form of screening.

Those who have felt entirely well during the pandemic are not routinely recommended to undergo health screening, but it is something to be considered as part of normal health monitoring for the health-conscious athlete.

Your GP should be able to guide you on what level of screening you may require, and who is the best person to assist you in the process.

References:

- 1) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do#is-there-any-time-restriction-on-being-outdoors-for-the-purpose-of-exercise>

Wales: 

<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance> and <https://gov.wales/leaving-home-exercise-guidance>