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This newsletter includes:

- Preparing for return to basketball
- Covid-19 stress
- Hygiene tips returning to sport
- Communication tips
- Signs of anxiety
- Players reluctant to get back on court
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- Online anxiety programs

## Preparing for Return to Basketball

The long-anticipated return to basketball is finally within our sights. Some players will be bursting with excitement getting back to sport seeing friends, others will be nervous, and for those particularly anxious they maybe dreading the return. All of these responses are normal.

Some strategies to help encourage a smooth transition back to sport include:

- Set the basketball routine
- Talk about the new routines at basketball stadiums, including different times, signing in at stadiums, using different entrances/exits and limits to spectators watching games
- Get players to prepare uniforms, shoes and water bottles
- Make sure you have everything you need for the return to basketball
- Allow extra time to get ready and be punctual to games and training
- Talk to your family about the importance of handwashing, hand sanitiser and social distancing
- Download the Covid Safe app

We have been living in the slow lane for months and some of us may have forgotten how chaotic getting ready for training and game days can be. To reduce stress, make sure the uniform is accessible, snacks and drink bottles are prepared, and everything is set up for smooth sailing.

Diet, sleep and exercise are important in preparing for return to sport. Some of us have become accustomed to raiding the fridge and grazing all day. We now need to ensure players have enough food to power them through sport and include protein, fruit and vegetables in your family's diet.



Good sleep habits improve concentration, mood and even boosts our immune system. Adolescent players should aim for 8-10 hours' sleep per night and younger players 9-12 hours. To ensure a good night's sleep, parents and carers need to encourage healthy sleep habits. Setting bedtime routines or set sleep reminders on the phone can help.

- No or limiting screen time 1 hour before bed
- No devices in the bedroom
- No caffeine or energy drinks from late afternoon, and if your teen is having problems sleeping, eliminate these from their diet

## Hygiene Tips for Returning to Sport:

- **Maintain social distancing of 1.5 metre**
- **Stay home if you are unwell with cold or flu symptoms, have a fever, or a cough**
- **No player, coach, team manager or parent can attend games/trainings if unwell. Notify Team Manager of absences**
- **Cough or sneeze into the crook of your elbow & wash hands after coughing and sneezing.**
- **See GP if unwell and get a Covid-19 test**
- **Self-isolate at home whilst awaiting test results**
- **Wash hands regularly with soap and water for 20 secs**
- **Carry hand sanitiser when out or using public transport. 60ml bottles with 70% alcohol are perfect pocket size**
- **Wipe phones and sport equipment (including basketballs) regularly with disinfectant wipes with alcohol concentration above 70%**
- **Do not put phones and devices on surfaces you prepare or eat food**
- **No eating food at basketball**
- **BYO drink bottles**
- **If using public transport use your MYKI and make sure it is topped up**
- **Keep 1.5 metres away from other people on public transport, you may have to leave seats spare**
- **On buses, please leave 2 seats behind and beside bus driver free and follow all bus driver's instructions**
- **When using school buses, public transport sit next to your sibling.**

Encourage your family to exercise, let them choose the activity and the intensity. Walking the family dog will work wonders. Exercise improves your mood by releasing endorphins (the feel-good chemicals in your body), thereby improving mental health and sleep.

Mindfulness and gratitude has been proven to improve mental health. Everyone loves a free app and there are lots of these available. Children often resist mindfulness; however, it is worth giving it a try and they have nothing to lose. When children feel anxious or worried, they often have negative thoughts ruminating (playing on a continuous loop) through their head. Unfortunately, it's the negative thoughts, self-doubt and the catastrophic thoughts that do this, using apps like smiling minds will help stop this constant chatter.

Another great strategy to try is practising gratitude or looking for the positives in every day. This doesn't have to be anything amazing; it could be appreciating a hot milo you enjoyed or a laugh with a family or friend. Recording these moments in a diary or on an app. '3 Good Things' is a free app available or families might like to buy the Resilience Project app which combines the gratitude and mindfulness in the same wellbeing app. By focusing and reflecting on the good things at the end of the day, it has the benefit of the individual focusing on the positives as opposed to negatives.

## Covid-19 Stress

Many of us may be particularly worried about the Covid-19 pandemic and whether it is safe return to basketball. Try to keep Covid-19 worry in check - basketball is safe to return to, and Eltham Wildcat management and staff are working hard to ensure that all appropriate protocols are in place to keep everyone safe.

Despite some recent increases of Covid-19, currently the community transmission rates remain low. The situation is constantly being monitored by the Chief Medical Officer and the Australian and Victorian Governments. All sports, and the safety of players, coaches, spectators and referees, are constantly being reviewed and updated.

Encourage family members to adhere to social distancing. The Wildcats, EDJBA and Basketball Victoria have strict guidelines in place and hand sanitiser is readily available at stadiums. Everyone is working hard to maintain everyone's safety in stadiums and during play.

Whilst the Covid-19 Pandemic has been devastating to watch overseas, it is important we focus on Australia's success in managing Covid-19. Social distancing is working, and we must continue to follow the current Chief Medical Officers advice.

If you or your child is anxious about catching Covid-19 have a discussion about the recommendations in the noted in this newsletter and how this limits the risk. All individuals can take steps to try and prevent Covid-19.

## Communication tips

Take your time to listen to your child's worries, validate their concerns and listen attentively. Show empathy.

Your child's worries may seem trivial to you, but to your child they may appear insurmountable.

Never be condescending. Show your care and support, by taking your time to help your child work through the problem.

Don't use phrases "But that's silly" or "You're being emotional"

## Signs of Anxiety

Racing thoughts

Can't think straight

Ruminating thoughts

Poor concentration/memory

Feelings of nervousness

Fatigue

Insomnia

Extreme fear or worry

Chest pains

Sweating

Rapid heart rate

Irritability

Anger

Frustration

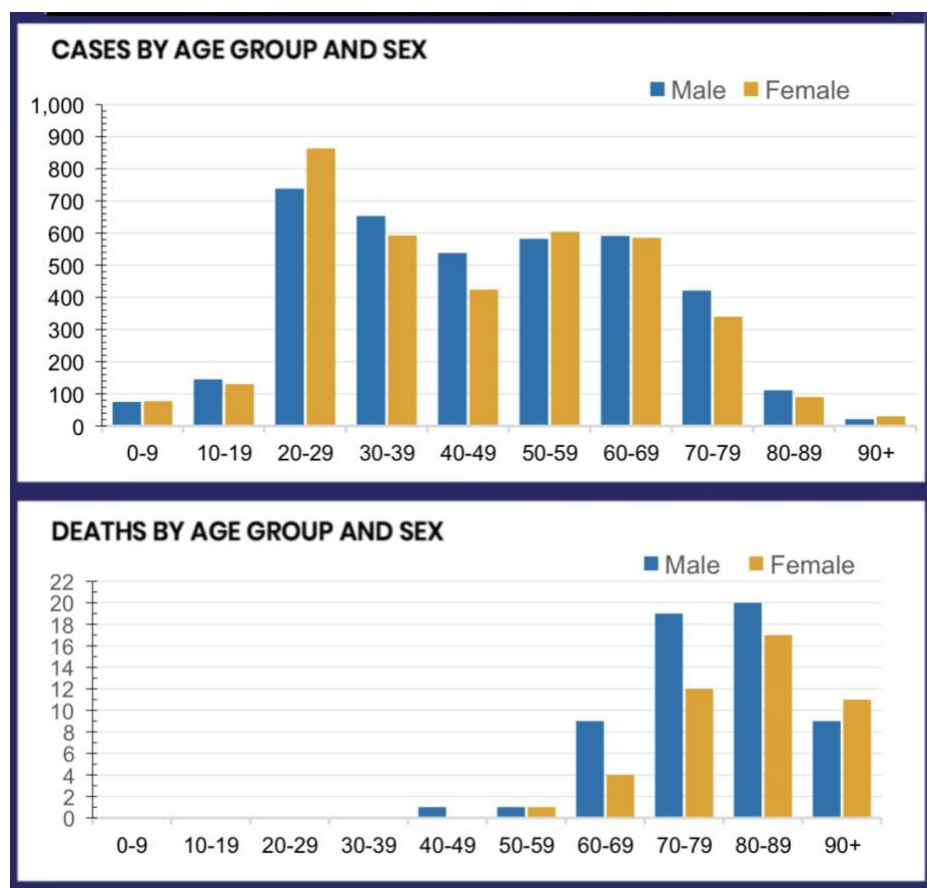
Joint or stomach pains

Feeling breathless

Teenagers have enquiring minds and it will not satisfy them saying they will be safe because you said so - use evidence to reassure your teen. Talk to them about how very few teens in Australia have caught Covid-19, and those that have had a mild illness or been asymptomatic (a carrier with no symptoms). The below infographic from 28th June 2020 shows the infections per age bracket in Australia, it also shows the deaths per age bracket. This document is updated daily by the Australian Government.

The below infographic can be used to show how they need to follow the rules with social distancing to protect vulnerable age groups, for example grandparents.

### Australian Covid-19 Cases by Age Group 28/6/20



## Players Reluctant to get back on Court

Some players may feel apprehensive returning to basketball, this is common after a long break from any sport. Allow your child to share their concerns, when having these conversations, it can help to remember these tips:

- Allow time for conversations (don't chat if you are distracted or busy)
- Teens often like to be busy when talking, go to for a walk together or if you both enjoy cooking, cook together.
- Talk when you and your child are calm
- Don't interrupt or rush your child, listen to their worries

Some worries might include:

- 'I won't be able to shoot a basket anymore'
- 'I haven't played basketball for so long; I won't be any good'
- 'Everyone will be better than me and I don't know anyone on my team, or my teammates will have forgotten me.'

## Supports for families/children

An excellent resource for parents/guardians of primary and secondary school aged children is <http://www.parentingstrategies.net/depression/>

This is guide for managing anxiety and depression. This is really worth reading.



If you need parenting support whilst you support your child's mental health contact HeadSpace.

<https://headspace.org.au>

Provides fact sheets, blogs and courses for parents and youth 12-25 years. Family clinicians available. Ph: 1800 650 890.



kidshelpline  
Anytime | Any Reason

Kids Helpline supports 5-25 yrs

Ph: 1800 551 800

<https://kidshelpline.com.au>

All of these concerns can be addressed with reassurance and practical advice. Some players may have lost motivation to practice during the break, they may now feel anxious about their skill level, reassure them the coaches can be contacted about this and they will help get you back to your previous standard. Children and particularly adolescents often feel insecure with peer friendships and fear rejection, try reassuring them that if they haven't forgotten their teammates, their team won't have forgotten them. If you child is anxious help them break it down into manageable chunks or prioritise what they need to do. Reassure players. Coaches are available to help them. Coaches and staff at Eltham Wildcats are experienced problem solvers, so let your child know they can access help from the club.

## Anxious about Return to Basketball

If your child is refusing to return to basketball or, is suddenly indicating they do not want to return to sport, take the time talk to your child about what is worrying them, what do they fear? Ask yourself is this unusual? Are there any signs you child is feeling anxious? If your child wants to return to sport, but feels they can't due to fear or anxiety, this is upsetting for everyone. Your child may feel upset they are missing out on the fun; however, they may need some help in overcoming these obstacles.

### Facing our fears can help then go away

Our fears do not go away without addressing what we are fearful or anxious about. Unfortunately, avoidance further compounds the anxiety, making it a vicious cycle. If your child is refusing to return to sport, this can be a stressful period, it is not due to anyone's fault, blame or feelings of guilt will not resolve this issue.

Some key strategies include:

- Seek medical attention if your child complains of illness - anxious children often complain of headaches, abdominal pain, nausea, muscle aches etc
- Seek a Mental Health review and support if you believe anxiety is stopping your child participate in hobbies, school or sport
- Be patient and kind
- Listen to your child's worries, some of the anxiety can be addressed if it concerns performance, or fitness etc.
- Notify staff or coaches at Eltham Wildcats, so we can work with you
- Be consistent
- Have a sport/basketball routine
- Giving your child opportunities to play socially as a family or with a friend to practice without the pressure of a group
- Ease back into basketball with clinics or social shooting hoops over the holidays

Eltham Wildcats Basketball club is passionate about players enjoying their basketball. We appreciate all players and families have had a long break from training and games. Coaches will be focusing on fun, reducing return to court nerves and sportsmanship. Players are not expected to win every game – the focus is on having fun and enjoying being back on court with their friends. Please reassure your child that this is primary focus on return to basketball.

## Links to Anxiety Programs

<https://www.brave-online.com/>

<https://www.turnaroundanxiety.com/>

<https://www.moodgym.com.au/>

## References

Australian Government  
Department of Health, *Corona virus (Covid-19)* [webpage]  
<https://www.health.gov.au>  
accessed 28/6/20

Reachout.com, 'Anxiety and teenagers' [webpage]  
<https://parents.au.reachout.com/common-concerns/mental-health/anxiety-and-teenagers>  
accessed 20/5/20

If your child is showing signs of anxiety or any other mental health concerns, it is important you access mental health services for support. GP's are a great starting point for a mental health care plan and to chat about child's wellbeing. GP's are able to provide referrals to services.

Whilst waiting for mental health treatment it can feel isolating and carers can find themselves extremely stressed. Free online programs are available to address anxiety. They provide assistance to your child and will give you tips to manage anxiety. These will not replace professional intervention; however, they can assist in the interim.

## Anxiety Prevention Programs

Brave is an evidence-based program for children, teenagers and parents. This involves cognitive behavioural therapy for the prevention of anxiety. It can be completed on its own or with the support of an online therapist.

<https://www.brave-online.com/>



Turn around anxiety is an American program which is available online (please note prices are in US dollars). This is for younger children 6-12 years.

<https://www.turnaroundanxiety.com/>



For students over the age of 16 years Mood Gym is an option.

<https://www.moodgym.com.au/>



Hopefully this newsletter has given you some assistance with planning for the return to basketball. If you are experiencing any concerns about your children returning to sport, please contact the Wildcats for support. The Wildcats can be contacted on 9439 5686 or if you have wellbeing concerns please email the wellbeing team - all contact with the wellbeing team is treated confidentially [welfare@elthamwildcats.net.au](mailto:welfare@elthamwildcats.net.au)

**We wish everyone a happy return to basketball. We look forward to hearing bouncing basketballs, and seeing happy players back on court soon, enjoying their basketball and being with their teammates in term 3.**