

NOLS Wilderness Medicine COVID-19 Disclosure, Practices and Expectations for Students



The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic raises questions about health and risk management while attending wilderness medicine courses. We want to ensure you are aware of how we're responding to the coronavirus pandemic, so you can make an informed decision about participation. These practices have been developed in consultation with federal, state, and local public health experts, peer organizations, and medical advisors and will continue to evolve as more information becomes known.

Close physical contact is an inherent part of our courses. We interact with and touch each other when we practice the skills of wilderness medicine such as splinting, patient movement, bleeding control, basic life support and when we practice patient care with scenario based learning. NOLS Wilderness Medicine has always had curriculum and practices in place to educate students and to reduce the risk of disease transmission. We have implemented additional strategies to further reduce the risk of disease transmission associated with physical proximity, but we cannot eliminate it.

People who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as defined by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) should carefully consider, in conjunction with their health care provider, whether to attend a wilderness medicine course at this time.

NOLS has instituted a 5 component strategy to decrease the risk of infectious disease spread in our classrooms. We will model and describe them all in greater detail at the beginning of your course. You should also review [this video](#) to visualize our practices.

All participants are expected to participate fully in this strategy.

Screening: We will monitor and assess all participants daily. You will be expected to check in each morning, answer questions regarding symptoms, and have your temperature checked.

If you have any of the following, you should not attend class:

- Cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, headache, fatigue, nasal congestion or sneezing (different than pre-existing allergies), abdominal discomfort (nausea/diarrhea), muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell.
- A temperature of over 100.4F/38C.
- In the past 14 days, have been in close contact with someone suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19. If a healthcare provider, In the past 14 days, have been in close contact with someone suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19 without wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Hygiene: We will provide the resources to practice heightened classroom hygiene. You will be expected to:

- Wash or sanitize your hands after interactions with others and/or entering or leaving group settings.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth with a tissue or your arm if you sneeze or cough.

- Wipe down surfaces and equipment after use using the provided cleaning materials.

Personal Protective Equipment: We will provide some personal protective equipment for use in your wilderness medicine course including gloves and cleaning supplies. You will be expected to:

- Bring a minimum of two masks. You will be given guidance on when mask use is required. Assume this will be at all times in the indoor classroom and when physical distancing is not feasible in the outdoor classroom. You will change or wash your mask daily.
- Wear gloves when in contact with another person. Gloves will be provided.
- Bring eye protection (sunglasses and safety glasses are ok) to wear when working in close contact with other participants.

Distancing: When feasible, physical distancing will be practiced. You will be expected to:

- Wear additional personal protective equipment (gloves, glasses, masks) when practicing skills or performing medical scenarios.

Compliance/Culture: We believe in the value of training people to help others and in supporting the best public health practices. You will be expected to:

- Model your commitment to quality medical care by supporting these strategies.
- Help others remember and adapt to these new practices.
- Stay home if you feel sick or the instructor asks you to leave class based on screening.

FAQ

Will my NOLS course be safe from coronavirus?

Contracting COVID-19, the disease caused by coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), is a new risk for everyone and (like other risks) cannot be eliminated. The updates to how NOLS operates a course have been developed and implemented to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and to detect signs of illness. For those who are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 as defined by the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC), please carefully consider, in conjunction with your healthcare provider, whether to attend a NOLS Wilderness Medicine course at this time.

Am I required to follow the stated practices?

Yes, all students and instructors are expected to adhere to the above practices and refusal to comply is grounds for dismissal from a course with no tuition refund. These practices are designed to reduce the risk of illness for all participants and would be expected in any setting where you are providing healthcare or first aid.

What if I have a mask exemption card or letter?

We recognize that wearing a face-covering or mask for extended periods of time is not feasible for everyone. However, mask usage is an integral part of our risk reduction strategy. If you are unable to tolerate wearing a mask for up to four hours at a time, you should delay your attendance until your condition changes or the requirement is removed.

Am I required to get a COVID-19 test prior to my course?

No testing is required prior to participation in a NOLS Wilderness Medicine course.

Have you made any updates to the paperwork I need to be aware of?

The NOLS Wilderness Medicine Student Agreement has been updated to include education about additional risks including:

- At times students will be in close physical proximity to one another or instructors.
- Illnesses may include...communicable and other infectious diseases from insects, animals, or people such as diarrhea, flu-like or respiratory illness, and other debilitating or life-threatening conditions including COVID-19 and other diseases caused by coronaviruses.

The NOLS Wilderness Medicine On-Course Student Information Form/Policies & Procedures has been updated to include a new policy:

- Participate fully in NOLS Wilderness Medicine's strategies to decrease the risk of infectious disease spread in our classrooms.

What should I be aware of while traveling to my course?

We request that you take steps to limit your exposure for 14 days prior to and while traveling to your course. This includes practicing physical (social) distancing, wearing a mask or face covering when in public or when physical distancing is not possible, frequent hand washing, and monitoring your health for symptoms of COVID-19.

What happens if I get sick before my course?

Do not travel to your NOLS course if you have COVID-19 symptoms (cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell), have in the past 14 days been in close contact with someone suspected or confirmed as having COVID-19, or you are confirmed or suspected as having COVID-19 in the past 10 days. We will work with you to transfer your enrollment to a later course.

What happens if I get sick during my course?

If you become ill during your course or your instructor asks you not to attend class based on screening, you should seek medical advice. Based on the medical advice you receive you may or may not be able to continue with your course. NOLS will evaluate each situation and work with you and the course sponsor to either prorate a tuition refund or to assist you in finishing your course at a later time.

What happens if a student tests positive for COVID-19 during my course?

If a student tests positive for COVID-19 during your course, NOLS will work directly with the public health authority to assure all participants receive appropriate guidance and medical advice. If NOLS cancels the remainder of the course, we will work with students to either prorate a tuition refund or to assist them in finishing their course at a later time. NOLS is not responsible for expenses related to a positive diagnosis on a course.

Will NOLS cancel my course?

NOLS reserves the right to cancel any course based on changing information or restrictions that affect our ability to operate at a given location. We will notify students as soon as possible if this occurs.

What if I have more questions?

Please contact us at wilderness_medicine@nols.edu or 866-831-9001.

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