



EUBS & ECHM position statement

on recreational and professional diving after the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak

Some countries in Europe have started to release the strict preventive measures taken to combat the spread of SARS-CoV2 and COVID-19 disease. As a result, and depending on the epidemiological situation in the region, the previous EUBS/ECHM position statement on the advisability of recreational and professional diving and performing diving medical examinations during the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak must be updated to reflect the new situation in some regions [1].

Hereby, the following recommendations are given for both recreational and professional diving after the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak.

It is expected that the virus SARS-COV2 will persist in the community, leading to a continued risk of transmission between persons if staying in direct proximity or sharing common personal equipment. Every dive center or diving team should conduct an analysis of risk prevention and mitigation using published recommendations (for example [2]). Generally, it is recommended:

1. **To continue the social distancing measures** as required by the local authorities also during diving operations (mostly during the surface phase of diving operations).
2. **To disinfect private and rental equipment**, including emergency oxygen units, with appropriate disinfectants covering broad spectrum of germs, including fungi, bacteria, spores and viruses.
3. **To avoid exchange of personal breathing systems** except in real emergency situations.
4. To plan any “breathing systems sharing” exercises in such a way that **personal protection** is ensured.

Scientific data on the clinical consequences of COVID-19 on the medical fitness for diving is scarce, as there is still less than six (6) months since the first cases were reported in Europe. Clinical publications show cases with severe deterioration of lungs, heart, central nervous system and kidneys after COVID-19 infection. Some concerns have been raised specifically for divers, as persisting lung or cardiac involvement has been noted [3] and there are already some national or language specific recommendations published, for example [4, 5]. As agreed by the panel of diving medicine experts, it is recommended:

5. **that divers who have tested positive for COVID-19 but have remained completely asymptomatic** should wait at least one (1) month before resuming diving
6. **that divers who have had symptomatic COVID-19, but not requiring hospitalization**, should wait at least three (3) months before applying for fit-to-dive clearance conducted by a diving medicine specialist
7. **that divers who have been hospitalized with or because of pulmonary symptoms in relation to COVID-19**, should wait at least three (3) months before applying for fit-to-dive clearance conducted or coordinated by a diving medicine specialist, with complete pulmonary function testing (at least FVC, FEV1, PEF25-50-75, RV and FEV1/FVC, and an exercise test with peripheral oxygen saturation measurement) as well as a high-resolution CT scanning of the lungs.
8. **that divers who have been hospitalized with or because of cardiac problems in relation to COVID-19**, should wait at least three (3) months before applying for fit-to-dive clearance conducted or coordinated by a diving medicine specialist with cardiac evaluation, including echocardiography and exercise test (exercise electrocardiography).

In case of any doubts, please contact the EUBS (www.eubs.org) or ECHM (www.ECHM.org).

Recommendations issued on **21st May 2020**.

On behalf of the EUBS:

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On behalf of the ECHM:

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References:

1. EUBS & ECHM position statement on the advisability of recreational and professional diving and performing diving medical examinations during the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak. 26th March 2020 (<http://www.eubs.org/?p=1104>, <http://www.echm.org/documents/English-EUBS-ECHM-position-on-diving-and-COVID-19-26th-March-2020.pdf>)
2. COVID-19 and Diving Operations. 10 recommendations on risk prevention and mitigation. 4th May 2020. DAN Europe, RSTC Europe (https://www.daneurope.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=acd21b88-05a1-408a-8e2b-b408af49c6b0&groupId=10103, <https://www.rstc-eu.org/Portals/2/docs/WRSTC%20Press%20Release%20Avoiding%20Disease%20Transmission%20in%20Diver%20Training.docx>)
3. Hartig F. Zielorgan Lunge – Tauchen nach Covid-19-Erkrankung? WetNotes Nr 36. 15th April 2020 (https://www.wetnotes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tauchen-nach-Covid-19-Erkrankung_WETNOTES-36.pdf)
4. Position of the Belgian Society for Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine (SBMHS-BVOOG) on diving after COVID-19 infection. 12th April 2020 (<http://www.sbmhs-bvoog.be/2020%200412%20Position%20of%20the%20BVOOG.pdf>)
5. Position de l'association Internationale des Centres Hyperbares Francophones (ICHF) sur la reprise des activités hyperbares en milieu professionnel dans un contexte d'épidémie à coronavirus SARS-Cov-2 (COVID 19). 7th May 2020 (<http://association-ichf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/position-ICHF-reprise-du-travail-en-milieu-hyperbare-et-de-la-plong%C3%A9e-professionnelle.pdf>)