

Guidelines for Softball 2021 with COVID 19 Protocols

Softballs

- Any ball that comes into contact with bodily fluids must be replaced or disinfected.
- All balls must meet NFHS and OHSAA requirements and must be new or in good condition.

Player Equipment

- Personal items such as towels, facial coverings and water bottles shall not be shared.
- If equipment such as helmets and bats must be shared, proper sanitization must be performed between users.
- Player/team equipment shall be sanitized before and after each practice or game.

Pregame Conference

- Attendees are limited to the head coach from each team plus the umpires.
- Coaches shall stay outside the width of the batter's box at home plate, maintaining six feet of distance between each person.
- Everyone attending this meeting must wear a face covering.

Substitutions

- Verbal exchanges shall occur six feet from the coach or substitute to the plate umpire and from the plate umpire to the opposing team's coach.

Bench and Field Conduct

- The number of individuals in the dugout is dependent on the size of dugout.
- Players and coaches must maintain six feet of social distance.
- Players are not permitted to leave the dugout area to congratulate players scoring or after home runs.
- Players and all team personnel shall follow the "no touch" rule – refraining from high fives, handshakes and other physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires and fans. A "tip of the cap" can be used following the game in lieu of the handshake line.

Charged Conferences

- Coaches holding defensive conferences must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the player(s) must be on the opposite side of the pitcher's circle maintaining the six feet distance.
- Only one coach is permitted during the conference.
- When a coach visits the pitcher, all other players shall stay outside the pitching circle.
- Team huddles without physical distancing are prohibited.

Exchange of Lineup Cards

- Lineups shall be handed to the umpire, and the umpire will verbally approve or ask any questions about the lineup.

Infractions by the Pitcher

- The pitchers shall not lick their fingers and wipe them off.
- Pitchers shall not put their hands to their mouths or blow into their hands prior to pitching the ball. This will be a "no pitch." Any umpire shall make this call. The ball is dead immediately. The ball will be replaced and sanitized and pitchers must sanitize their hands before play continues.

REQUIREMENTS

General Requirements

- **People (players, coaches, officials, spectators, etc.) feeling sick or that have been exposed to someone sick, should not attend or participate in competitions or practices.**
- All participants and spectators shall practice at least six feet social distancing and wear face coverings at all times except when eating/drinking or on the field of play.
- Host facilities shall communicate with spectators “know before you go” before each event.
- Anyone attending a practice or game – players, coaches, officials, trainers, cheerleaders, volunteers, staff, spectators, etc. – must conduct a symptom assessment before each practice or contest, and anyone experiencing symptoms must stay home (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptomstesting/symptoms.html>).
- Any player, spectator, coach, or umpire who is under a modified quarantine due to an in-school exposure must not attend practice or competition until the completion of quarantine.
- Consistent with state guidance, schools/teams regarding “Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19 Cases:”
 - Immediately isolate, and seek medical care for, any individual who becomes ill or develops symptoms.
 - Contact the local health department about suspected COVID-19 cases or exposure.
 - The affected person should seek COVID-19 testing as soon as possible. Teams, schools, and clubs should work with parents to ensure they have access to testing through their healthcare providers or direct them to testing options.
 - Coaches/administrators must work with the local health department to identify individuals who were potentially exposed to help facilitate contact tracing. This includes, but is not limited to, athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, parents and other support personnel.
 - A team or school must notify all athletes and parents/guardians associated with the affected team regarding a positive test. Athletes and families must be reminded of proper daily health screening protocols.
 - If the affected individual participated in competitive play, the team is responsible for notifying any opponents played between the date of the positive test and two days prior to the onset of symptoms. If the teams or schools in different counties, the health departments in each county should be notified to help facilitate effective contact tracing.
 - An athlete who tests positive for COVID-19, whether symptomatic or asymptomatic, must not return to sport activities until the athlete has completed a medical exam and documentation is provided that clears the individual to return to play. The documented medical exam must specifically include an assessment of the cardiac/heart risk of high-intensity exercise due to the potential of myocarditis occurring in COVID-19 patients. More information on this issue can be found at <https://www.acc.org/latest-in-cardiology/articles/2020/07/13/13/37/returning-to-play-aftercoronavirus-infection>.
 - Players, coaches, officials or other individuals who had close contact (within six feet of an infected individual for at least 15 minutes), or who had direct physical contact with the person (e.g., who were coughed on or sneezed on by the infected person), must self-quarantine.

Requirements for Coaches

Coaches must (1) Participate in COVID-19 education developed for them by the Ohio Department of Health, and (2) Educate their players on how to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 using resources provided by the Ohio Department of Health. This training can be found at:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/responsible-restart-ohio/sector-specific-operating-requirements/sector-specific-operating-requirements>

- Coaches and other personnel must wear face masks at all times, including when arriving and departing the facility and during active play.
 - Under the state's Sports Order, at minimum facial coverings (masks) should be cloth/fabric and cover an individual's nose, mouth, and chin.
- Sanitize equipment as often as time permits.
- Coaches who wish to discuss a rule or a ruling on the field must maintain at least six feet of physical distance from the umpire.
- Base coaches must stay six feet from all runners at all times.
- Do not shake hands or fist bump other officials, players or coaches.

Requirements for Players

- Conduct daily symptom assessments before each practice or contest.
- No congregating before or after practices or games is permitted.
- Do not share equipment, towels, facial coverings, water bottles, other drinks or food. If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation must be performed between users.
- All players must sanitize their hands should their gloves be removed before and after warm-ups and at period breaks.
- All those on the bench shall observe social distancing of six feet.
- Facial coverings are required under the Sports Order for student-athletes not participating in the contest, and/or players in the dugout/bench area when not playing defense. At minimum, facial coverings should be cloth/fabric and cover an individual's nose, mouth, and chin.
- Do not shake hands or fist bump other officials, players or coaches.

Requirements for Facility Hosts

- Seating must be in groups of no more than four people who know one another, although up to six members of the same household may be seated together.
- Each seating group must be separated from the next group by at least six feet in each direction.
- Designate a Compliance Officer who is responsible for compliance with the Ohio Department of Health Director's Sports Order.

Requirements for Spectators

- Conduct daily symptom assessments before each contest.
- No congregating before or after practices or games is permitted.
- Six-foot social distancing must be maintained between individuals/family groups.
- Facial coverings are required unless exceptions can be met as listed in Ohio Department of Health Director's Sports Order. At minimum, facial coverings should be cloth/fabric and cover an individual's nose, mouth, and chin.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Coaches

- Communicate your guidelines in a clear manner to students and parents prior to events with reminders as appropriate.
- Consider conducting practices in "pods" of same students, always training and rotating together in practice to ensure more limited exposure if someone develops an infection.

- Keep accurate records of those athletes and staff who attend each practice and contests in case contact tracing is needed.
- At a minimum, before and after every practice or contest, sanitize equipment as often as time permits with an EPA approved sanitizer for emerging pathogens.
- Consider limiting contests against only teams in your local area or, if out-of-state, against teams located in counties that are contiguous to Ohio.
- Should not share clipboards, whiteboards, dry erase boards or any other equipment used for coaching purposes.
- It is recommended that each team have an equipment handler to remove bats and helmets from the field of play. This person may wear gloves and/or sanitize equipment after use.

Recommendations for Players

- Athletes should tell coaches immediately when they are not feeling well.
- Arrive at the facility dressed in partial or full uniform and plan to leave the facility in partial or full uniform.
- Consider making each student responsible for their own supplies and ensure distancing of equipment to avoid cross contamination.
- Students should wear their own appropriate workout clothing (do not share clothing), and individual clothing/towels should be washed and cleaned after every workout.
- If equipment must be shared, proper sanitation must be administered between users.
- Cloth face coverings/masks are permitted during active play if an individual prefers to wear one. Cloth face coverings/masks are not required while engaged in active play. State and local requirements for face coverings are to be followed when not actively engaged in play.
 - If worn on the field, face coverings may be of any number of colors, but not distracting.
 - Gaiters are permitted as face coverings. If a gaiter is worn, it should have two layers, or fold it to make two layers, per CDC's recommendation.
- Bring your own water bottle.
- It is recommended that sunflower seeds, gum and similar products be prohibited in the confines of the field.

Recommendations for Parents

(A family's role in maintaining safety guidelines for themselves and others):

- Make sure your child and immediate household members are free from illness before participating in practice and competition (if there is doubt stay home).
- Provide personal items for your child and clearly label them.
- Disinfect your student's personal equipment after each game or practice.
- Educate yourself on the risks and benefits of athletic participation in the time of COVID and ensure you and your athlete are aware of the guidance surrounding athletic events.