



MPA Softball Committee

Softball Recommendation for Return to Participation

Referencing Orders and Guidelines from the Following Resources

National Federation of State High School Associations
Governor's Office - State of Maine
Maine Department of Education
Maine Department of Economic & Community Development
Maine Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Principals' Association Sports Medicine Committee

The Maine Guidelines for Community Based Sports have labeled the sport of softball as a “Moderate Risk”. “Moderate Risk” activities are sports and activities that involve intermittent close proximity or limited, incidental contact, but with protective equipment or mitigating measures in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants (e.g., wearing masks, modifying play to maintain 6 feet of physical distance, cleaning and disinfecting). The following recommendations are being made in accordance with the Maine Department of Economic & Community Development guidelines.

Coaches and School Administrator(s) must hold a team educational session prior to the first contest to educate student-athletes of all rules related to competitive competition with other school districts and the requirements outlined below. In addition, each coach, paid and volunteer, must complete the free Covid-19 course called Covid-19 for Coaches and Administrators currently available on the NFHS Learn platform at <https://nfhslearn.com/>.

- **DISTANCING**
 - Space players at least 6 feet apart whenever possible (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills, when explaining drills or the rules of the game).
 - Organizers should identify staff members or volunteers to help maintain physical distancing among players, coaches, umpires, and spectators.
 - Require individuals to maintain 6 feet of physical distance from individuals who are not part of their household group whenever possible.

- **SPECTATORS**

- Organizers of school-based activities are responsible for limiting the number of individuals that can gather in a shared space, in accordance with the [Governor's Executive Order](#) on gathering size limits. (Updated 11/6/20)
 - Players, coaches, volunteers, officials, and spectators count toward the gathering limit. (Updated 9/10/20)
 - If a space cannot accommodate the gathering limit without complying with the six-foot distancing requirement, occupancy in that space must be limited to allow for such compliance.
 - All gathering limits as further established by the [Governor's Executive Order](#) are subject to the following limits: (Updated 3/5/21)
 - All indoor gatherings limits:
 - **Effective March 26, 2021 through May 23, 2021:** 50% of permitted occupancy or 50 persons, whichever is greater.
 - **Effective May 24, 2021 and thereafter:** 75% of permitted occupancy or 50 persons, whichever is greater.
 - Any outdoor gathering taking place at a facility or event that is subject to a permitted occupancy limit is subject to the following limits:
 - **Effective March 26, 2021 through May 23, 2021:** 75% of permitted occupancy.
 - **Effective May 24, 2021 and thereafter:** 100% of permitted occupancy.
 - Face coverings must always be worn by athletes, coaches, staff, meet officials/workers, and spectators.
 - Spectators must maintain 6 feet of physical distance between each other and athletes.
- **MASKS**
 - All individuals must always wear masks, including athletes during play.
 - Athletes must replace their mask if it becomes wet or otherwise soiled.
 - Unless the governing body for the sport has a specific recommendation regarding plastic face shields, do not wear them in place of a mask given potential safety risks.
 - Masks should not be the color of the softball.
 - **HAND AND RESPIRATORY HYGIENE**
 - Regularly and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
 - Make sure to educate all participants on the importance of washing hands or using hand sanitizer before, during, and after play, as well as during practices and all team-based activities.
 - Cheering/yelling by athletes, spectators, and coaches is strongly discouraged. There should not be yelling, chanting, or singing in the dugout or team bench area. Clapping, and other activities that do not involve the projection of respiratory droplets are low-risk alternatives.
 - **SCHEDULING**
 - Following the Community Sports Guidelines, competition between teams from the same geographic area (e.g., the same county and in some cases adjacent counties) will be permitted.
 - There shall be no minimum number of games required and the maximum number of games is 16.
 - **FACILITY & PLAYING AREA**

- When possible, schools should provide separate entrances and exits for teams and spectators to separate the teams from the public.
- Home teams shall provide hand sanitizer/sanitizing stations at each team bench.
- **VISITING TEAM**
 - Visiting teams should arrive in a self-sufficient manner.
 - Provide their own softballs for warmups.
 - Come ready to play the contest dressed in uniform.
 - Medical kit with necessary athletic training supplies.
 - All students-athletes must bring their own water vessel clearly labeled with their name.
 - Visiting teams should plan to bring their own water jug for their student-athletes to refill their water vessels.
 - These jugs/refill stations should be clearly marked with the team name and purpose of only for use by such school when possible.
 - Designated space for visiting teams may be available at schools that have protocols in place for sanitizing those areas.
 - Visiting teams will be briefed by the home team medical staff on protocols and isolation space if an athlete becomes sick during play.
- **SCREENING**
 - Student-athletes must complete and pass a self-screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to participation or entrance into an opposing school's facilities.
 - All game day staff/umpires must complete and pass self-screening questions prior to arriving at the event.
 - Spectators must complete and pass a self-screening for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 prior to attending any event.
- **TEAM BENCHES**
 - Team areas may be expanded for players only toward the foul pole area, or behind the fence area, to promote physical distancing and player safety. The area should be clearly marked as an out-of-bounds area and protected by a screen. Teams are allowed, depending on the facility, to use the area behind the backstop fence as an additional team area.
 - Limit bench personnel to observe physical distancing of 6 feet but prioritize the safety of those athletes in the bench area.
 - There should be sanitizer available in each dugout.
 - Schools should maximize the number of bench seats for each team (seats may be arranged in such a way that one is behind the other.)
 - All participants and coaches must always wear mask while on or in the bench area.
 - Mask may be removed while hydrating so long as the person hydrating is 6 feet from anyone else in/on the bench area.
- **PRE-GAME CONFERENCE**
 - Limit attendees to the two umpires, the head coach from each team, and a single captain from each team.
 - The coach and captain should stay outside the batter's box for the conference. All individuals must be masked and maintain a physical distance of 6 feet during the conference.

- Suspend handshakes prior to and following the pregame conference. Coaches and captains can use a good sportsmanship wave.
- No pregame introductions. Send players to their field positions for the start of play.

- **IN-GAME PROCEDURES**

- Coaches, athletes, and all bench personnel, must always wear masks during the contest.
- Athletes, coaches, and game personnel should sanitize hands after each half-inning.
- Prohibit unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, chest bumps, hugs, or team huddles.
- No handshakes post-game - utilize the good sportsmanship wave.
- The home team is responsible for providing legal game balls. Each defensive team will put a new game ball into play from the bench area when necessary.
- No chanting or singing in the team bench area.
- No seeds or spitting.
- Shared equipment (bats, helmets, catcher's equipment) should be sanitized on a regular basis.
- If an athlete provides their own bat, helmet, or catchers equipment, they must meet the required safety certifications.
- Coaches must stop at the foul line to communicate with an umpire. This communication must be for a rule interpretation or to ask the umpire to check with his partner.
- The pitcher is the only person allowed in the pitcher's circle. The infielders should not gather in the circle after "throwing it around" following warmups for each inning. Physical distancing should be maintained.
- The pitcher may not go to their mouth, they may have a damp cloth, not the color of the ball, in their back pocket. They must wipe their hand prior to touching the ball.
- The plate umpire will work from behind home plate 6 feet behind the catcher.

- **TRANSPORTATION**

- Transportation to and from sports activities require attention because of increased risk of proximity and poor ventilation.
- Limit the use of carpools or van pools. When riding in a vehicle to a sports event, encourage players to ride with persons living in their same household. Carpooling with individuals from different households is not recommended.
- If carpooling with individuals outside one's household group is necessary, increase ventilation in the vehicle, and all riders must wear a facial covering, and use hand sanitizer.
- If buses are used, spread individuals out to the extent possible, increase the airflow with open windows if weather permits, require use of masks, and provide hand sanitizer for use when entering and exiting the bus.