



**Return to Play  
Document  
June 15, 2020**

**SOFTBALL NOVA SCOTIA**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of the guidelines within this document is to create minimum standards for a safe return to play of softball within the Province of Nova Scotia, while still maintaining the integrity of the game. The return to play information in this document has been developed to best protect all Softball Nova Scotia members, including players, coaches, umpires, spectators & Executive members. These best practices do not supersede any protocols, guidelines, or restrictions outlined by Provincial and/or Federal Health Authorities. All members should be aware of Nova Scotia specific guidelines & changes that are made to those daily.

As we begin to open & return to play resumes, we urge ALL Softball Nova Scotia stakeholders to share with us, any details of any challenges that may arise and may not be addressed within this document. Once an issue is identified, those assigned by the President & Executive Director will work on how to best address the issue & then share that information with all involved.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The items listed in this document are recommended safeguards for restarting Softball activities in Nova Scotia. Associations, Leagues, Staff, Players, Coaches, Parents and Spectators should continue to follow Federal, Provincial and Government guidelines.

The proposed phases contained within this document are guidelines for our membership, however Softball Nova Scotia reserves the right to alter the phases based on the ever-changing landscape of COVID-19.

The membership's ability to follow protocols outlined in each phase will help to determine when and if Softball Nova Scotia is prepared to move to the next phase.

# GENERAL GUIDELINES

## Phase 1: Return to Training

|         | <b>Adaptations</b>  |
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| General | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Environment/Facility/Equipment</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure players, parents and coaches are aware of safety protocols prior to arriving at the field. This can be accomplished through email, other social media platforms or means of communication.</li> <li>• Associations should have a participant registry or the ability to trace names, dates, time, and contact info for training activities (registry tracking sheets must be held for 30 days). Should a COVID-19 case be reported, this will assist in tracing.</li> <li>• Anyone displaying any illness symptoms <b>MUST NOT</b> be allowed to participate. Softball Nova Scotia should be notified of the instance immediately by the Association President. Before resuming any participation, they must send a confirmation email to Softball Nova Scotia, the Association President &amp; the team coach stating they are no longer infected with the virus.</li> <li>• It is recommended that signage is well displayed in the entry area regarding the spreading of the virus, proper hygiene, information on physical distancing and what to do if you have any symptoms.</li> <li>• Facilities should develop protocol on entry into a ballpark for the teams and umpires.</li> <li>• Ensure diamond layout is proper for coaches' box, on deck circle, umpire/catcher area to maintain physical distancing.</li> </ul> |

- Given the limited physical contact within our sport, and the spacious outdoor environment, the Softball NS feels physical distancing will not be an issue.
- Anyone who has been in contact with someone who is sick or not feeling well should not be permitted to participate.
- No sharing of water bottles or food. Sunflower seeds, gum, candy, etc. or spitting of any kind is NOT permitted.
- All players, coaches and umpires should have their own water bottles/sport drinks.
- No water jugs or shared plastic/paper cups.
- No sharing of personal helmets, gloves or face mask.
- No sharing of any other equipment unless disinfected between personal uses. Instance where bats are shared, they should be disinfected after each player's use.
- All catchers should have their own gear, especially a mask. (if not possible, then gear must be properly sanitized before it can be used by another player).
- Avoid handshakes, high-fives and team meetings.

**Environment/Facility/Equipment**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the washroom– or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available (have these readily available or ask members to bring their own).
- Use sanitary practices recommended by the public health authorities.
- Practice proper hygiene as it can help reduce the risk of infection or spreading infection to others.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- The Coronavirus that causes COVID-19 spreads through droplets that people produce as they breathe, talk, cough and sneeze.
- When coughing or sneezing: Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of your arm, do not use your hands.
- Use a tissue and dispose of any used tissues as soon as possible in a lined waste basket and wash your hands afterwards.

- Keep Physical Distancing of 2 m or 6 feet: Wear a mask if in close contact with others (surgical procedure or cloth mask is sufficient, N-95 mask not required). Masks don't replace proper physical distancing.

- ❖ Given Softball is an outdoor sport SNS believes physical distancing will not be an issue.
- ❖ Severe Injury (SNS process is to call 911)
- ❖ Minor injury (such as ice pack can be done by the athlete or assisted by the team designated person).

Masks are strongly encouraged at this time.

- All practice drills to be created & implement 2 meters physical distancing requirements.
- No interactions with officials unless necessary (injury, calling time to make a lineup change, etc.) Must be done with 2 meters physical distancing.
- Line ups to be posted in an area that officials have easy access to if necessary.
- Coaches should sanitize any high touch surface areas prior to vacating the facility (as dugouts are not being used, there should be minimal high touch areas).
- Payments can still be made to officials prior to the game.
- The following precautions are recommended to minimize the risks of multiple handling of the same softballs:
  - ❖ Balls should be sanitized after use or not used for four days to reduce likely hood of transmission.
  - ❖ Two different training groups should not be using the same Softballs (unless it's been sanitized between use).
  - ❖ Athletes should be provided with the opportunity to sanitize their hands between drills/activities.
- All members/participants must sign a Release, Waiver of Liability, and Indemnity acknowledging the inherent risk in participation, and the release of liability towards Softball Nova Scotia and the association. SNS will provide the waiver. Associations must have the signed waiver prior to allowing any stakeholder on the field. All guidelines including Signing of the waiver must be followed, Failure to do so could result in loss of membership, negative impact to insurance, and negatively impact the possibility of the sport progressing in the Return to Play plan. Most importantly, we need to ensure the safety of all participants.

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|                   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Physical Distancing</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players sanitize hands after warming up before entering the bench area.</li> <li>• It is encouraged that spectators be limited to one family member, <u>or</u> no more than one acquaintance of the athlete. All spectators will be expected to maintain physical distancing</li> <li>• All First Aid kits are to be updated to include PPE (as deemed appropriate by public health) should physical contact may be necessary due to injury</li> <li>• One designated person to handle injury situations to avoid physical contact between the injured person and multiple people</li> <li>• Players and coaches are responsible to have hand sanitizer available to use throughout the practice/game. If possible, teams can supply hand sanitizer for their team use, otherwise it is the responsibility of the Member to have their own.</li> <li>• 10 people permitted on the field of play. Must include a minimum of two coaches.</li> <li>• Ride sharing to be discouraged whenever possible.</li> </ul> |
| Practice/Training | <p><b>No Competition in Phase 1</b></p>   |

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|         | <p><b>Game Guidelines</b></p>  |
| General | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Game Guidelines</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dugout can be used for competition by coaches' bench area is the responsibility of all who use them. The entire area should be disinfected prior to anyone entering it. A disinfectant spray or wipes should be used to ensure the area is clean. The cleansing will also need to be done in between practices/games. Dugouts will be off limits during phase1 (coaches/players will bring personal gear onto the field.)</li> <li>• Pre-Game Coaches conference, only one coach should be allowed for each team and should stay 2 meters apart. No players should be present</li> </ul> |

- Players to spread 2 meters apart and beyond the bench area along the fence line OR behind the bench to maintain distancing of 2 meters. The area can be marked with caution tape to extend the bench area.
- Teams can have practices as a group (no sharing the field with other teams) gates will remain open during competition (unless the gate opens into the field of play).
- Full team drills are permitted, assuming core public health physical distancing guidelines are met.
- Games will see a strict 1 hour and 45-minute time limit. As field bookings are typically done in 2-hour slots, we want to ensure a 15 minutes grace period as one group enters the facility and one leaves.
- The batter should be responsible to pick up their own bat if an out is made.
- If the batter reaches a base, the on-deck person should retrieve the bat by the barrel side avoiding contact with the grip.
- Teams and Individuals travel will be restricted during this time to no overnight trips and no outside of your current Softball Region. Exceptions for athletes training on SNS Canada Games teams (travel must be for Canada Games activities). Exception will be made for travel if there is No Softball, league teams, associations within the region. SNS Travel permit will be required for the travel exception. All guidelines including must be followed, Failure to do so could result in loss of membership, negative impact to insurance, and negatively impact the possibility of the sport progressing in the Return to Play plan. Most importantly, we need to ensure the safety of all participants.
- Game balls should not be shared between the teams. Each team, or the home team, should provide sanitized approved or mutually agreed upon similar game balls.
- Balls should be controlled by the respective benches.
- If a ball goes out of play, the defensive team will throw a sanitized game ball into play. The out of play ball will be returned to the bench and be wiped.
- All balls should be wiped and disinfected after each half inning by the appropriate team.
- Bats – players should have their own bats. Each bat is sanitized prior to the game or if shared it needs to be wiped prior to another player using.
- On deck batter should be limited to only 1 bat & stay in designated area until stoppage of play.



- Umpires should not handle any equipment (bats, helmets, etc.).
- If an umpire must handle equipment (e.g. safety check), equipment should be sanitized prior to use.
- All plays at all bases should be force plays including home plate. There should be no tag plays, including catcher pick off attempts to eliminate potential contact.
- Conferences will be allowed at the pitching area only, with only the coach and pitcher/catcher while maintaining proper 2-meter distancing. (coach should wear a mask).
- Any lineup change or coach challenge/dispute with an umpire, will be done while maintaining 2 meters distancing from the umpire. The coach will ask for time from his current location and once granted, the umpire will go to a designated safe area to receive the change or discuss dispute with the coach. Both coach and umpire should wear a mask.
- Players and coaches are not allowed handshakes, high fives or fist bumps throughout the game.
- There should be no post game handshakes, celebrations, team meetings or cool downs. Teams are asked to exit the bench area and facility as efficiently as possible. A designated person should ensure the area is clean and sanitized for the next team.
- Players are asked not to congregate in the parking lots before or after the game.
- Addressing the entire team must be done with 2 meters spacing between everyone.
- Home plate umpire shall avoid coming into contact with the catcher.
- Players are encouraged to wash their equipment and shower once they get home.
- Coaches, players and umpires must always approach each other keeping a minimum distance of two meters.
- Players are encouraged to wash their equipment & shower once they get home.
- No stealing/advancing home on a passed ball.
- All outs are force outs.
- No dropped 3rd strike at any level
- No tagging.

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|                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No rundowns.</li> </ul>   |
|                   | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Field Recommendation -Umpires</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umpires who are not comfortable with an environment may remove themselves at any point without fear of discipline.</li> <li>• Recommended Umpires to provide their own hand sanitizer.</li> </ul> <p>NOTE: Additional to current rules, not replacing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rule 4, Section 1.c.1: Base coaches must always stay 2 meters from a runner or batter they wish to talk to, including during offensive conferences.</li> <li>• Rule 5 Section 9.b: Coaches holding defensive conference should stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the pitcher/catcher should be on the opposite side with all maintaining 2 meters apart. All other players should remain in position and not participate in the conference.</li> <li>• Rule 4, Section 9: It is recommended that only players and coaches be in the dugout. Players may also be out of the dugout in the extended bench area. The number of players and coaches in the dugout will depend on the size of the dugout, maintaining 2-meter social distance.</li> <li>• Rule 4, Section 9: Players should not be allowed to leave the dugout area to congratulate players when scoring or after home runs.</li> <li>• Rule 6, Section 6.b.3 (FP), Section 5.b.3 (SP): Pitchers should not be permitted to lick fingers.</li> </ul> |
| Practice/Training | <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Slo-Pitch Mechanics</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 umpire system, Base Umpire will start on the line at 1B.</li> <li>• Remove being in the slot. They can be in front, behind the catcher keeping the 2 meters distance from the catcher.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Fast Pitch Mechanics</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plate umpire to position deeper than normal to call balls and strikes.</li> </ul>   |

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|                       | <p>Pre-Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Umpires can wear gloves and a mask if they desire.</li> <li>• Umpires will still check equipment before a game.</li> </ul> <p>Game Time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of verbal exchange from safe distance when making lineup changes from the coach to scorer and opposing team is recommended.</li> <li>• Umpire should maintain 2 metre distance from any player as a starting position when rotated and/or counter rotated.</li> <li>• Umpires should not handle equipment on the field during play.</li> <li>• Participants who fail to comply with the distancing standards will receive a warning. Subsequent failures may result in removal from the game.</li> </ul>  |
| Practices/Training    | <p><b><u>Phase 1</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phase 1 Practice-Training/Skill Development</li> <li>• Environment -General Adaptation apply</li> <li>• Equipment -General Adaptation apply</li> <li>• 10 people permitted on the field of play (this must include coaches)</li> <li>• Coaches must maintain physical distancing while working with athletes.</li> <li>• Athletes to use bring personal gear onto the field.</li> <li>• No Competition Phase 1</li> </ul>   |
| Return to Competition | <p><b><u>Phase 2</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to competition will be based on changes made to the outdoor gathering limit being increased to a minimum of 24.</li> <li>• Two teams 9 players 2 coaches 1 umpire.</li> <li>• Environment -General Adaptation apply</li> <li>• Equipment -General Adaptation apply Coaches must maintain physical distancing while working with athletes.</li> <li>• Game Guidelines will apply Teams are permitted to travel outside of their Regions for competition (within Nova Scotia). Teams will be permitted to travel outside of the province only if restriction are lifted by the province.</li> <li>• Provincial Championships to be held, with restrictions</li> <li>• No more than six teams per single site event</li> <li>• No skills competitions, ceremonies, or additional events associated with the tournament</li> <li>• Recreational divisions permitted to hold play offs or weekend events</li> </ul> |

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| Competition | <p><b>Phase 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All competition modifications to remain in place.</li><li>• Any competition change recommendations must be reviewed and approved by SNS in alignment with the NS Sport Guidelines.</li><li>• Teams will be permitted to attend competition outside of their Softball Region.</li><li>• Provincial Championships held (with limits of 6 teams per event)<br/>Atlantic events TBD based on governmental interprovincial guidelines.</li></ul> |
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