

Safe Play: Back to the Diamond

2021 Baseball and Softball COVID-19 Safety Guidelines



As of 5/7/2021

UPDATE: As of 5/7/2021 – Based on new information provided by the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), all mask/face covering requirements have been changed to recommendations for outdoor events UNLESS the event exceeds 500 people, in which case masks/face coverings are required for spectators.

This change to not require face coverings at outdoor venues where attendance is under 500 people is referenced in the [sports guidance](#) (on page 5) and the outdoor venue guidance ([Entertainment and Meeting Venues / StaySafeMN](#)).

Recommendations/Guidance

ARRIVING AND LEAVING THE VENUE

- All participants should maintain at least six (6) feet of distance from any other person.
- Whenever possible, practice and game start times should be staggered so a team leaves the field before the next team arrives.
- Whenever possible, everyone should enter and exit through designated areas that are different from each other.
- Gathering and congregating on and around fields is discouraged.
- Participants should enter and leave the field in a timely fashion and not congregate.
- Hand washing or hand sanitizing, when soap and water is not available, is strongly recommended when arriving at and leaving the venue.
- Carpooling is discouraged. If carpooling is not avoidable, masks are strongly encouraged.

PRACTICES

- All athletes should maintain at least six feet of distance, whenever possible, from any other person.
- Practice groups should maintain distance from each other and not mix during the duration of the practice.
- Hand sanitizing is strongly recommended during practices.
- When there is a play at a base, the runner and fielder should resume physical distance immediately upon completion of the play.

GAMES

- All athletes should maintain at least six (6) feet of distance, whenever possible, from any other person.
- Game balls should be wiped down/sanitized between innings and before being put back in play.
- During a game, participants should maintain at least six (6) feet of separation in the dugout. Participants not able to be in the dugout will be lined up down their respective foul lines or behind the backstop with six (6) feet of separation. [Field Layout Map](#)
- Each team is responsible for bringing hand and equipment sanitizing products to games.
- Hand sanitizing is strongly recommended during games.
- When there is contact of any kind in the field of play, players should resume physical distance immediately upon completion of the play.
- If a concession stand is open, the people in line should maintain at least six feet of spacing.

COACHES

- Coaches should maintain at least six (6) feet distance from any other person.
- Masks/face coverings are recommended to be worn when not actively participating on the field of play and cannot maintain at least six (6) feet away from others.
- Repeatedly remind players not to touch their faces.
- Up to four coaches, including one COVID-19 safety manager, permitted for a practice or game.
- Coaches should strongly consider testing weekly if not masking during practice or play.
- No touch rule – coaches should refrain from high fives, handshake line, and any other physical contact with fellow coaches, opposing coaches, players, umpires, and spectators. A “tip of the cap” will be used as a salute to the opposing team to promote sportsmanship following the game.
- Should conduct a daily symptom assessment and stay home if experiencing symptoms.
- No spitting, chewing gum, or sunflower seeds.
- No sharing of food or drinks.
- Each team is responsible for bringing hand sanitizing products to practices and games and use of sanitizer between innings is recommended.
- Coaches should ensure the players are adhering to social distancing in dugout/bench area, during team meetings other similar situations.

Respect the game, respect the guidelines.

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Recommendations/Guidance

ATHLETES

- Outside of your game-time, you should maintain at least six (6) feet distance, whenever possible, from any person outside of your household.
- Masks/face coverings are recommended to be worn when not actively participating on the field of play and cannot maintain at least six (6) feet away from others (dugout/bench area, team meetings, and other similar situations).
- Athletes should strongly consider testing weekly if not masking during practice or play.
- No touch rule – players should refrain from high fives, handshake line, and any other physical contact with teammates, opposing players, coaches, umpires, and spectators. A “tip of the cap” will be used as a salute to the opposing team to promote sportsmanship following the game.
- No spitting, chewing gum, or sunflower seeds.
- No sharing of food, drinks/water bottles, or towels.
- Whenever possible, equipment and personal items should have proper sanitization and should not be shared. If equipment should be shared, proper sanitization should be administered between users.
- Batting gloves should be worn whenever possible, especially when handling a bat.
- Hand sanitizing is strongly recommended during practices and games.
- See here for testing information ([COVID-19 Testing for Minnesota Organized Sports Participants](#))

PARENTS/SPECTATORS

- Should maintain at least six (6) feet distance from any other person and stay in the designated spectator area outlined by the venue.
- Masks/face coverings are recommended at all times for patrons of outdoor venues.
- Parents or spectators should maintain social distance from each other if they attend practices.
- Should conduct a daily symptom assessment and stay home if experiencing symptoms.
- No sunflower seeds allowed.
- See [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Outdoor Venues](#).
- Spectators should be separated from the competition by a minimum of twelve (12) feet.
- If spectators and participants can be clearly separate by at least twelve (12) feet, then participants do not need to be included in the total capacity (see MDH Guidance).
- Spectators should be separated by at least six (6) feet from other households/spectators groups.
- Strongly recommended to test weekly for COVID-19.
- Hand washing or hand sanitizing, in the absence of soap and water, is strongly recommended during the games.

UMPIRES

- Should maintain at least six (6) feet distance from any other person.
- Masks/face coverings are recommended to be worn when not actively participating on the field of play and cannot maintain at least six (6) feet away from others
- Should conduct a daily symptom assessment and stay home if experiencing symptoms.
- Should avoid exchanging documents or equipment with any other person.
- No touch rule – umpires should refrain from physical contact with coaches, players, and spectators. A “tip of the cap” will be used as a salute to the teams to promote sportsmanship following the game.
- It is recommended that umpires officiate the game behind the pitcher’s mound. (If an umpire chooses to officiate behind the plate, they are incurring an additional risk to themselves and the athletes.)
- During extended at bats or a break in game play, it is strongly encouraged that umpires step away and create six (6) feet of distance from others.
- Hand washing or hand sanitizing is strongly recommended during the games.

COMMUNICATION AND CONFIRMED CASES

- Each team should keep an accurate log of their rostered players, spectators, and opponents, including opposing coaches’ contact information. In the case of someone being infected, this document will be necessary for MDH to perform contact tracing.
- Organizers should post these guidelines at their facilities, where applicable, and disseminate them to all coaches, umpires, players, and parents/spectators.
- These guidelines should be communicated to all organizers for dissemination to all participants, and should be posted at facilities.
- Signage should be posted promoting physical distancing, including directing traffic and outlining spectator areas.
- Organizers should regularly communicate to participants that they should stay home if/when they are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Organizers should contact the MDH about any suspected case of COVID-19 or known exposure.

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Screening Assessment

Symptoms & Screening Assessment

- Do you have temperature of 99.5 (F) or higher?
- Do you have a new or worsening cough today?
- Do you have any of these other symptoms?
 - ◊ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - ◊ Fatigue
 - ◊ Muscle or body aches
 - ◊ Headache
 - ◊ New loss of taste or smell
 - ◊ Sore throat
 - ◊ Congestion or runny nose
 - ◊ Nausea or vomiting
 - ◊ Diarrhea

USCAH COVID Care Package (COVID Education & *GameDay* Ready App) is recommended for all competition in order to verify completion of daily screening assessment and to maintain accurate attendance.

Requirements/Guidance

- Conduct a screening assessment prior to arriving at the facility.
- If you answered “Yes” to having any of the symptoms listed, you **must** stay home.
- All participants (including athletes, coaches, umpires, volunteers, etc.) are strongly encouraged to participate in weekly COVID-19 testing.

When to start and end quarantine when exposed to a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19

People who have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, excluding people who have had COVID-19 within the past three (3) months or have been fully vaccinated.

People who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to three (3) months as long as they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within three (3) months of their first bout of COVID-19 may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

What counts as close contact?

- Was there direct exposure to respiratory droplets from the person with COVID-19, such as spitting, coughing or sneezing directly onto someone else?
- Was there direct physical contact or other close physical contact with the person who has COVID-19?
- Were players able to stay 6 feet apart from the infectious person? If not, how long were they close (i.e., within 6 feet) to the infectious person?
- How long did players play with the infectious person, and were the players exerting themselves, yelling, or otherwise expelling aerosol droplets?
- Did players have contact with the case on the sidelines or on the bench?
- Did players have contact with the infectious person in any indoor spaces?
- Did players travel with the person – for example, to and from practices or games?
- Did players eat meals together?
- Did the players have social interactions with the case outside of sports activities, including team meetings, parties, sleepovers, dinners, road trips, or other extracurricular school activities?

For outdoor sports, an infectious person participating in a training or game does not automatically trigger a broad quarantine any longer.

STAY SAFE MN

MDH Guidance

- [MDH COVID-19 Organized Sports Practice and Games Guidance for Youth Sports as of 5/6/2021](#)
- [COVID-19 Preparedness Plan Guidance: Requirements for Outdoor Seated Venues](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing for Minnesota Organized Sports Participants as of 4/22/2021](#)
- [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19](#)
- [Venue Occupancy Calculator](#)
- [RedCap Case Reporting: COVID-19 Case Reporting Form](#)
- E-Mail Address: health.Sports.covid19@state.mn.us

CDC Guidance

- [COVID-19 Playing Sports](#)
- [Considerations for Youth Sports](#)

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