



Softball Newfoundland Labrador

**Return to Play Plan
(June 2020)**

Introduction



The “Return To Play” information in this document is geared towards protecting all stakeholders involved in the great game of Softball (Athletes-Coaches-Executives-Umpires-Scorekeepers-Volunteers-Spectators).

Softball NL will follow Local Public Health Guidelines, as well as Municipal, Provincial and Federal Guidelines with respect to COVID-19.

All Associations, Teams, Leagues, Umpires and Volunteers will need to follow the recommendations based on their respective area and situation.

Everyone’s Health And Safety Is Paramount!



Disclaimer



The items listed in this document are suggestions of recommended safeguards for restarting Softball activities in Newfoundland Labrador.

Should there be any discrepancies between this protocol and the outlined restrictions / requirements of the Local Public Health Guidelines, as well as the Municipal, Provincial and Federal guidelines, the governmental restrictions / requirements shall take precedence.

Softball NL reserves the right to suspend all sanctioned activities further, should we feel the safety of our members is not being exercised.



Pre Activity Screening



Coaching staffs/volunteers will ask every participant attending a sanctioned softball activity (Skills Development, Clinics, Practices, Games, etc.) the following questions:

1. Are you exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 (Fever, Dry Cough, Chest, Respiratory Pain)
2. Has any member of your household exhibited any symptoms?
3. Have you travelled outside NL in the past 14 days?
4. Has any member of your household travelled outside NL in the past 14 days?
5. Have you experienced any other health issues or symptoms in the past 24 hours?

If the participant answers yes to any of the above questions they will not be allowed to take part in the team activities, but will be sent home.

Associations/Leagues are to ensure that every participant, - coaches, athletes, officials & volunteers have signed the updated Softball NL Waiver and that the Associations/Leagues have signed or acknowledged copy before activities start up again.

There is to be no indoor activities until such time as formal approval has been received from Softball NL.

***Pre Activity Screening Must Be Done
Before Every Softball Activity!***



Sanitization Check-List

Recommended sanitization supplies:

- ☐ *Lysol (or equivalent product) Sanitation Wipes.*
- ☐ *Hand Sanitizer.*
- ☐ *Non Medical Face Masks (PPE) are recommended when not able to social distance.*
- ☐ *Athletes are recommended to provide their own sanitization supplies for their personal equipment, and use before/during/after all softball activities.*
- ☐ *Teams are recommended to provide sanitization supplies for all team equipment, and use before/during/after all softball activities.*
- ☐ *All athletes are recommended to have their own gloves, helmets, batting gloves, etc. (If not possible, equipment must be sanitized properly prior/post use).*



Sanitization Check-List (...continued)

Recommended sanitization supplies:



- ☐ *It is recommended that catching gear is not shared, unless properly sanitized first.*
- ☐ *Assigned volunteers arrive at the facility prior to athlete arrival time to physically check the area to ensure it is safe, free of obstacles and dangerous obstructions. They ensure the bases are sanitized and dugouts are clean. Once that has been completed, sanitize the field/team equipment and self sanitize.*
- ☐ *Coaches/Volunteers inspect the area to ensure nothing has been left and the area is clean and sanitary.*
- ☐ *A designated adult affiliated with the team will manage an attendance sheet with first/last names and a phone number for anyone at the field. Records must be kept for 1 month.*
- ☐ *Participants are encouraged to wear face masks where social distancing cannot be maintained.*



Government NL Alert Level 3

Softball NL Phase 1

Minor - SKILL DEVELOPMENT/PRACTICE AT HOME

Minor - MEMBERSHIP & STAKEHOLDERS LOGISTICAL ORGANIZATION

Adult - PRACTICE AT FIELD

(Timeline - TBD By Municipalities)



Government NL Alert Level 2

Softball NL Phase 2

Minor - SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Minor - TEAM PRACTICE AT FIELD

Adult - POTENTIAL FOR LEAGUES TO START

(Timeline - TBD By Municipalities)



Pre Activity Preparation

- Each Association/Team observes the Provincial gathering requirement.
- Assigned volunteers arrive at the facility physically checking the area to ensure the space is safe, free of obstacles and dangerous obstructions. Coaches/Volunteers prepare the practice area, including infield, setting out bases and equipment, as necessary, and dugouts. They ensure the bases are sanitized and dugouts are clean.
- Participants arrive by household only, no car pooling. During practice/skill development sessions, no one is permitted in the dugouts.
- Every athlete will report first to the Coach/Volunteer to be pre-screened before they are permitted on the softball diamond. QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE ANSWERED!
- Spectators are advised to maintain physical distancing by the household and utilize the perimeter of the field.
- A designated team member records the first and last names of all participants, including coaches and submits that information electronically to their club contact who maintains a data spreadsheet of attendees should an outbreak occur.



Skills Development / Practice



- Athletes and coaches are NOT to congregate in the dugouts. Instead, must keep physical distancing rules in mind when choosing an area to place personal belongings, equipment, etc.
- **Coach/Coaches have prepared practice plan which ensures all activities are done while maintaining physical distancing of 2 meters. No contact or huddles or team meetings are permitted. When athletes take a break, they must return to their designated position for a water break and rest.**
- Athletes are required to have their own hand sanitizer and every participant attending practice must sanitize their hands as frequently as possible.
- Coaches/Volunteers will sanitize the balls as frequently as possible during the practice, and it is recommended a minimum once after every drill. They will also sanitize bases both before and after practice. Coaches are responsible for ensuring there are enough balls to rotate through planned drills, or to stop and sanitize the ones being used before continuing the practice. While different forms of sanitation for the softballs have been examined, at this point, we recommend a spray application of a sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol, same as hand sanitizer requirements.



Practice [..continued]



- Whenever possible, the equipment will not be shared, batter will tee up the ball themselves and hit into a net. Once they have completed the drill, the balls are sanitized and the next batter enters the area. Alternate: To avoid having to clean balls between batters, if ALL participants agree to wear batting gloves, they do not have to clean until end of drill.
- No shared batting helmets, water bottles, food, etc.
- No sharing of catching equipment.
- When bats are shared, the batter will hand the bat to a coach/volunteer, holding it by the grip, the coach/volunteer will take it holding the bat by the barrel and proceed to sanitize the bat before the next batter takes it.
- Pitching and catching drills will be done between a single catcher and pitcher only, they will have a supply of balls that those two are touching and once they have finished, each athlete sanitizes their hands and the balls are sanitized before the next battery begins.
- Base running drills will be done while maintaining physical distancing in all cases, by both coaches and athletes.
- Skill development exercises including batting cages and pitching machines will only be done outdoors.



Post Practice



- Team meetings are done while maintaining physical distancing, each player only uses their own equipment bag. All team gear is sanitized and stored in equipment bags. When possible, equipment bags will be stored away from each other.
- Athletes leave the venue immediately after the practice, and only within their own household. Parents must be present to pick up their child as soon as the practice ends.
- Coaches/Volunteers inspect the area to ensure nothing has been left and the area is clean and sanitary.



Phase 1 Criteria for U12 to U16

Protocol

All criteria of Phase 1 above will apply for this age group as well as the following...

- It is strongly recommended that a parent/guardian be present for the entire duration of every practice and skill development exercise.
- When minor first aid (cuts, bruises, scrapes) is required, only the household member will administer first aid.
- Major first aid will be administered by the qualified and assigned team member, practicing usual medical sanitary protocol with the household member only in attendance.
- Parents and athletes will be instructed on the protocols in place for physical distancing and managing their own equipment bag, beverages and food.



Phase 1 Criteria for U8 & Timbits (U10)

Protocol

- The criteria for U12/U16 teams will also be followed by all participants and households for this age category.
- Drills and physical literacy activities will be done between the athlete, coaches and/or volunteers maintaining physical distancing. Use of hand sanitizer or washing as frequently as possible, following instruction from the coaches/volunteers.
- Hitting drills are not recommended due to the sharing of equipment and safety factors. If hitting drills or exercises are held, the bats and balls must be sanitized prior to the next athlete touching them. Batting helmets are required and they are not to be shared.



Government NL Level 2 Continued

Softball NL Phase 3 (Dependant On Provincial Health Directives/Restrictions)

Minor -MODIFIED GAMES WITHIN MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS ONLY
Minor/Adult -POTENTIAL FOR PROVINCIAL TOURNAMENTS

(Timeline - TBD)



Pre-Game



- Venue or facility space is scheduled through the club scheduler as per the Provincial Guidelines regarding the number of people.
- Assigned volunteers arrive at the facility prior to athlete arrival time to physically check the area to ensure it is safe, free of obstacles and dangerous obstructions. Municipalities/Volunteers prepare the infield with bases and lime, and dugouts. They ensure the bases are sanitized and dugouts are clean. Once that has been completed, sanitize the field equipment and self sanitize.
- Participants arrive at a pre-set time by household only, no car-pooling. The Coaches/Volunteers are present to guide the athletes to designated areas where they ensure physical distancing and each athlete maintains their own equipment bag and water bottle. Participants may use dugouts, assuming social distancing.
- Every athlete will report first to the coach/volunteer to be pre-screened before they are permitted on the softball diamond.



Pre-Game [..continued]



- Each participant is required to have their own water bottle, equipment bag, glove, batting glove/ball, bat, shoes and catcher's gear. Participants must come to the field dressed and ready to take part. This includes umpires, coaches and athletes. Each participant is also required to have their own hand sanitizer unless a sanitizing station has been set up beside each team's dugout.
- Spectators are directed to the perimeter of the field where they are advised to maintain physical distancing by household bubble.
- A designated team member records the first and last names, as well as phone numbers of all participants including coaches, and officials, and submits that information electronically to their club contact who maintains a data spreadsheet of attendees should an outbreak occur.
- Coaches prepare a controlled pre-game warm-up, minimize shared use of equipment and ensuring physical distancing is maintained.



Pre-Game [..continued]

- One representative from each team will meet with the umpire, maintaining physical distancing between all participants. The team representative will hand over a copy of their team line-up sheet, filled out completely.
- No pre-game team huddle.



Game Protocols



- It is highly recommended all participants wear a covering over their nose and mouth when on the playing field.
- Unless unavailable, dugouts will be used while maintaining physical distancing. All other members of the team on offense are to remain outside the dugout in areas designated by the coaches/volunteers and marked for the team members.
- Prior to each team going on defense, and when they come off the field after being on defense, all team members must use hand sanitizer or soap and water if available.
- Umpires to sanitize their hands after every half inning at a minimum.
- After each play (hit, walk, strikeout, HBP), the ball is to be changed out and replaced with a sanitized ball. Home team or Association Officials are responsible for maintaining a supply of sanitized balls. Clean and sanitized balls will take priority over same make and model ball. Method of sanitation recommended is a spray sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol content.



Game Protocols [..continued]



- Athletes are encouraged to carry hand sanitizers with them on the field and apply as often as possible.
- Between each pitch, the umpire will physically move away from the catcher to maintain distance.
- Between each pitch the batter will move out of the batter's box to maintain physical distancing. They can return to the batter's box when the pitcher and catcher have resumed their positions. The umpire will signal play ball before the pitch is made.
- Umpires will not touch any equipment, other than returning a ball into play.
- On field coaches will be permitted to stand outside the coach's box when physical distancing is necessary, but safety of the coach and athletes must be a priority.
- If the batter strikes out, they will carry their bat back to the dugout, or hand its barrel towards the coach or volunteer to clean prior to the next use of that bat.



Game Protocols [..continued]



- No infield meetings or huddles at pitcher's circle while teams are on defense.
- Coaches may call time for a meeting with their team while on defense, but must maintain physical distancing.
- Coach/Umpire conversations will be done while respecting the physical distancing protocol in all cases.
- No high fives, handshakes or intentional contact.
- Athletes will acknowledge their teammates, competitors and officials with a wave or a cheer, while maintaining physical distancing among themselves and their opponents.
- No sunflower seeds, gum or spitting.



Game Protocols [..continued]



- Athletes should not touch their mouth or nose, do not lick your fingers prior to, immediately after or while you are touching the ball or bat.
- In the event of a minor injury to an athlete or official, only one representative from the team will tend to them. The teams will remain away from the injured participant, respecting the physical distancing protocol.
- In the event of a serious or major injury, the team emergency preparation protocol will be observed with team officials assuming their roles to ensure the safety and well being of all participants.



Best Practices *(Highly Recommended, But NOT Mandatory)*

1. Associations/Leagues to consult with their municipality to ensure adequate signage is provided warning of physical distancing and sanitary requirements.
2. Associations/Leagues to ensure their municipality is servicing and monitoring washrooms. If not, the Association/League must either do so themselves to current standards or ensure the facilities remain closed and notify all participants.
3. Associations/Leagues should ensure concession stands have been permitted to open and are meeting all local health authority requirements for their sanctioned activities, or they remain closed.
4. Youth participants are to follow a rule of two when using the washroom. Either a member of their household accompanies them to the washroom, or if appropriate, a teammate, while respecting physical distancing.



REQUIREMENTS FOR COACHES

- **ALL** coaches will be required to register/attend an online conference call with Softball NL Executive Director that will outline the details of the Return to Play protocol and sign off indicating they have received the training and agree to comply/enforce with the set modification before ever stepping on the field.
- Coach or Volunteers **MUST** screen their athletes and be screened themselves at the start of any softball event (Practice/Game/Skills Camp/etc.). It is recommended that teams use the screening provided by the Government of Newfoundland Labrador.

