

NGSSA Health and Safety Guidelines
2021 Season

The State of Washington classifies softball as a “moderate risk sport” for the transmission of COVID-19. The State has specific guidance for restarting softball activities, and recommendations for safely conducting these activities. For more information, please visit Governor Inslee’s Sporting Activities COVID-19 Requirements

Critical to the success of our return to play in a safe and healthy way will be our collective cooperation and vigilance with COVID-19 mitigation strategies. We recognize we all have a role to play in reducing the risks of spreading the disease; as we come together, we must employ a number of best practices and strategies.

**COVID Waiver**

Before participating in any league activities, including practices and contests, all players, coaches, umpires and volunteers must sign and return the **NGSSA Health and Safety Waiver for the 2021 Season.** This waiver includes:

* A full list of potential COVID-19 symptoms
* Expectations and responsibilities of each willing participant, including the requirement to self-check for any symptoms of illness daily, including the taking of temperatures, before attending any NGSSA activity or event.
* Agreement to stay home if ANY COVID-19 related symptoms are present AND to notify team Health and Safety Officer of potential or confirmed illness and any pending COVID-19 test as well as reporting results of testing as soon as known due to potential exposure of other participants.
* Agreement to stay home if they become aware of any contact with a known case of COVID-19 or a suspected case, pending testing.
* Signatures of both parents and participants to certify honest disclosures on an ongoing basis.

**Daily Screening Procedure:**

Each NGSSA team will appoint one assistant coach/volunteer to assume the role of the Health and Safety Officer. This individual will:

* Track attendance at each practice, game, and event for the sake of contact tracing.
* Track participants in any small groups, if needed for any close-contact drills.
* Ensure that each participant before each activity (practice, meeting, game) has completed the self-check log on TeamSnap app.
* Report to the league any suspected cases of COVID-19, or players who need to be sent home due to illness, or any reported illness by any participant.

**If You Are Sick, Stay Home**

Stay home if you are sick, if you are experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19, or if you have been in close contact with anyone who has COVID-19. This applies to all athletes, coaches, umpires, spectators and any paid or volunteer staff. Any person exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 will not be allowed to participate in any league activity and should contact his or her primary care provider or other appropriate health-care professional. Those who are excluded from training or contests due to COVID-19 symptoms or because they are close contacts must follow King County or Snohomish County isolation and quarantine guidance before returning to play.

Anyone receiving a positive COVID-19 test results will be required to receive a negative COVID-19 test result and clearance from a medical doctor before they return to any league event.

**Masks and Face Coverings**

All coaches, players, umpires, and any other volunteer staff must wear face coverings at all times. Spectators must follow any Department of Health facial covering order in effect at the time of the activity.

**Player equipment**

* Players are required to use only their own equipment, including helmet, hats, batting gloves, fielding gloves and catcher’s equipment. There will be absolutely no sharing of baseball equipment.
* Bats can be shared if and only if they are properly wiped down by a couch after each use, or if all players wear batting gloves.
* Players and families are strongly encouraged to clean and disinfect bags and equipment after each use by a parent or guardian.

**Practices**

* The team Health and Safety Officer will confirm all players completed the self-check log on TeamSnap app.
* Players and families should maintain physical distancing while approaching fields.
* Spectators are not permitted to attend practices. Families are encouraged to “drop off” their players at practice with coaching staff and maintain a safe distance from the event.
* Players will set their equipment spaced six feet apart along the fences or sidelines, players will avoid confined spaces including dugouts and bleachers for all practices.
* All players, coaches, umpires, and volunteers will wash their hands with soap or hand sanitizer before entering the field of play.
* All participants (players, coaches, umpires, volunteers, and spectators) will wear a mask or face covering as mandated by NGSSA, and Governor Inslee’s Sporting Activities COVID-19 Requirements.
* Team stretching and warm-up drills must be structured to avoid close contact. Coaches are encouraged to structure and limit warm-up drills to avoid formation of lines that allow for close contact between players.
* All practice drills must be designed and executed to optimize physical distancing between participants to include tee drills, soft toss, and the formation of lines awaiting repetitions.
* All players, coaches, umpires, and volunteers will wash their hands with soap or hand sanitizer at the end of practice.

**Games/Scrimmages**

* Fan attendance is governed by the Governor Inslee’s Sporting Activities COVID-19 Requirements. All fans must remain 6’ away from anyone that is not their immediate family or household.
* Players and coaches will remain 6’ apart while in the dugout areas and at all times unless it is required during the game on the field. The dugout area most likely will need to be extended into the bleachers (behind a fence).
* Parents, players, coaches, and family members must take their temperature and screen themselves before leaving their house. Players will need to follow the Daily Screening Procedure.
* Parents, players, coaches, and family members must remain home if they have any illness or symptoms of COVID-19.
* Each team will supply a ball to be used when their team is on defense. Umpires, coaches, and spectators will avoid contact with the game balls, allowing defensive players to retrieve all foul balls, whether in or out of the field of play.
* All players, coaches, umpires, and volunteers will wash their hands with soap or hand sanitizer before and after the game/scrimmage.
* Equipment will not be shared, including helmets, hats, batting gloves, fielding gloves, and catcher’s equipment. Bats can be shared if wiped down by the coach after each use, or if all players are wearing batting gloves.
* No shared team cooler or drinks. Everyone must bring their own.
* There will be no team meetings unless everyone is at least 6’ apart.
* Home plate conferences and other meetings should be conducted electronically prior to the game, when possible. If required to happen at the field everyone must stay 6’ apart.
* Player equipment should be spaced out 6’ apart behind the dugout or elsewhere.
* There will be no physical touching, including high fives or handshakes. At the end of games, players will line up on respective baselines and cheer, shout, wave, or tip hats to the opposing team and umpires.

**Umpires**

Umpires will be required to wear a mask and socially distance when possible. Umpires may be positioned behind the Pitcher or behind Catcher.

**Drinks and snacks**

* All participants including players, coaches, and umpires are required to bring their own water bottles to all activities. Water bottles should be clearly marked with the participant’s name. There will be no shared water coolers permitted.
* No spitting will be allowed by any player, coach, umpire, spectator or volunteer.
* Gum and seeds are not allowed by any player, coach, umpire, spectator or volunteer.
* There will be no sharing of snacks or any food items including post-game snacks. Players should avoid bringing snacks. If a snack is required for medical reasons, it must be individual, pre-packaged food for individual consumption. When consuming snacks, Players need to remain at least 10 feet from all other players, coaches, spectators, or volunteers.

**Reporting**

Any Player, Coach, Umpire, or Spectator who tests positive for COVID-19 must report the positive result to their team’s coach, and the appropriate Division Director within 12 hours of finding out.

Those who are excluded from training or contests due to a positive COVID-19 test result or diagnosis, or because they have been in close contact with someone receiving a positive COVID-19 test result, must follow all DOH and local public health isolation and quarantine guidance before returning to training or contests. NGSSA will require a negative COVID-19 test result and clearance from a medical doctor before they are allowed to return to any league event, including practices and contests.

If any player/coach/volunteer reports a positive test, all team members and coaching staff exposed to the individual must also pause play and/or quarantine, according to the CDC guidelines. Games canceled due to teams quarantining may be rescheduled, at the sole discretion of NGSSA.