



2020-21 Softball Rule Considerations

NHIAA Softball Committee Adopted for 2021-22 Season

In support of the Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics and Activities, the NFHS Softball Rules Committee offers this document for state associations to consider whether any possible rules could be altered for the 2020-21 season. The considerations outlined in this document are meant to decrease potential exposure to respiratory droplets by encouraging social distancing, limiting participation in administrative tasks to essential personnel and allowing for appropriate protective equipment.

Note: This is not an exhaustive list and there might be additional steps in each school, city, and state to help prevent the spread of virus. Even when taking all precautions, there will still be risk of transmitting illnesses. Everyone should stay vigilant about the health of members of their teams. Lastly, the situation with Covid-19 is rapidly changing. These considerations may quickly become outdated. Please keep up with the latest from the CDC and other health officials in your state.

The NHIAA Softball Committee highly recommends and encourages that all participants (players, coaches, managers, umpires, etc.) wear face coverings (cloth is permissible if the nose and mouth are covered) during practice and competition. The NHIAA Council **recommends** that face coverings be worn while actively participating in spring tournaments and **requires** that face coverings be worn when not actively participating and appropriate distancing cannot be maintained.

If a school participating in the playoffs has more restrictive playing requirements than those prescribed by the NHIAA, in the spirit of sportsmanship and by mutual agreement, the Council supports the two schools playing by the more restrictive policies.

Return to Competition

General Considerations:

- Have hand sanitizer and wipes available at the field.
- No one touches the score sheet except the scorer.
- Disinfect the bench/dugout prior to competition.
- Sanitize bases after each contest.
- No seeds, gum or spitting.
- Eliminate handshakes pre and post-game.
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tournaments and **requires** that face coverings be worn when not actively participating and appropriate distancing cannot be maintained.

- Per guidance from the NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, Plastic shields covering the entire face (**unless integrated into the face mask and attached to a helmet**) shall not be allowed during contests. Their use during practices increases the risk of unintended injury to the person wearing the shield or teammates.
- Each team must provide their own sanitized softballs while on defense.
 - The game should begin with a sanitized ball for each half-inning.
 - Anytime a ball leaves the playing field, it must be sanitized prior to returning to play.
 - Have a bucket available for non-sanitized balls so they can be sanitized.
- The color requirement for Caps, Visors, Headbands, Helmets, etc. has been waived for the 2021 season.

Considerations for Athletes:

- Players must clean and sanitize equipment after each game.
- The number of individuals in the dugout is dependent on the size of dugout. Players and coaches must maintain 6 feet of social distance. NFHS rules allow for dugouts/designated warm up areas to be extended to provide for social distancing. These extensions should be created to consider all safety guidelines for Softball.
 - Players are not permitted to leave the dugout area to congratulate players when scoring or after home runs.
- When possible, equipment should not be shared (helmets, bats, catching equipment) however shared equipment provided by staff or volunteers must be cleaned and disinfected according to CDC guidance after every use between athletes and at the completion of each practice, training session, or sporting event.
- Pitchers cannot wear optic yellow cloth facial coverings
- Pitchers are not allowed to put their hands to their mouths prior to pitching the ball. This will be a "no pitch." Any umpire is permitted to make this call. The ball should be called dead immediately and it will be a "no pitch." Ball goes to the dugout for sanitizing, pitcher sanitizes hands before play continues.
- No sharing of water bottles.

Considerations for Coaches:

- Lineups should be handed to the umpire, and the umpire will verbally approve or ask any questions about the lineup. Recommended for lineup cards exchanged team to team and teams to scorekeeper to be shared via photo or text.
 - The verbal exchange of substitutions should occur 6 feet from the coach to scorer and opposing team when making lineup changes.
- Coaches holding defensive conferences must stay on the home plate side of the pitcher's circle and the player or players must be on the opposite of the pitcher's circle maintaining the 6 feet distance. No more than 2 players plus the pitcher is allowed.

Only one coach is permitted during the conference. If a coach visits the pitcher, all other players should stay outside the pitching circle.

Considerations for Umpires:

- Bring personal hand sanitizer.
- Umpires do not handle equipment on the field during play. Contact with the game balls should be as limited as possible.
- During a pre-game conference, limit attendees to one coach from each team plus the umpires. Coaches should stay outside the width of the batter's box at home plate, maintaining 6 feet of distance between each person.
- Plate umpire should stand deeper than normal to call balls and strikes.
- Umpire may wear disposable glove and masks/face coverings.

Softball Committee Approved – 3.15.2021

Sports Medicine Committee Approved – 3.17.2021

NHIAA Council – “took out cloth/mask and added face coverings (cloth is permissible if the nose and mouth are covered) and “cloth is permissible”. Approved 3.19.21

NHIAA Council Amended re: face coverings during the spring tournaments – 5.13.21