



Softball Ireland: Return to Play Protocol

Facilitating the safe return of softball to Ireland during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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In 2020 Softball Ireland are introducing the following reasonable steps to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

	Mandatory	Recommended Best Practice
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each team is required to have (at every event): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hand sanitiser⁶ - to disinfect hands; Anti-bacterial wipes (single use dry wipes and anti-bacterial spray also acceptable) - to disinfect equipment; Bin bags - to dispose of used cups, tissues etc. safely. Each team must bring two (2) 11" and two (2) 12" <u>game-quality</u> balls to games for use during defensive innings. Ball exchange must be managed by the defensive team. Each team must disinfect their balls during offensive innings. Players must avoid sharing equipment. Each player should use their own helmet, glove, batting gloves etc. Where possible, players must use their own bats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All personal and team equipment is recommended to be disinfected immediately before and after every event. This includes bases, training or game balls and team bats. Game balls should ideally be new and unopened. Where possible, ball exchange should be managed by a sub. Balls used in tagged plays should be disinfected immediately. Balls should be disinfected every 15 minutes during training. Bats should be disinfected between each use. Helmets, gloves, face masks etc. should be disinfected between each use. Personal belongings and equipment should have adequate separation in the dugout to avoid cross-contamination.
Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No more than <u>two</u> (2) teams permitted at any one diamond at the same time. <u>Absolutely no tournaments or blitzes.</u> Three (3) or more teams are permitted to use the same facility provided there are no more than <u>two</u> (2) teams present at any diamond at any one time. If more than one (1) diamond is present at a facility, their home plates must be separated by <u>at least</u> 600 feet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If three (3) or more teams are using the same venue for a game or training, separate pitches should be used. If three (3) or more teams are using the same venue for a game or training, teams not actively competing against each other should not interact. Game and training times should be staggered to avoid congestion in public spaces e.g. car parks.
Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participants must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing while arriving at venues¹. All participants must use hand sanitiser on arrival at venues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players, coaches, umpires and spectators are strongly encouraged to travel separately or with members of their own household only.
Warm Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All players must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing¹. All players must use hand sanitiser prior to warming up. All equipment used must be disinfected before the game. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only one (1) team should warm up on the diamond at any given time. Consideration should be given to providing each team with an opportunity to warm up on the diamond.
Players	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must conduct a daily symptom assessment and remain home if symptomatic in the preceding 48 hours². Must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing <u>except</u> when the ball is in play¹. This also applies to base coaches. Must follow a 'no touch rule', refraining from high fives, hand-shaking and all other physical contact with their teammates, opposing players, umpires and spectators. Must wait for all members of the opposing team to leave the field before taking up fielding positions at each changeover. Must not chew gum, spit, lick fingers, smoke or vape. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players in the HSE <u>High</u>⁴ or <u>Very High</u>⁵ Risk groups are <u>strongly discouraged</u> from attending games or training. Players should bring individual water containers and refrain from sharing bottled water with other players. Regular hand sanitising is strongly recommended. If a player is put out while batting, they are required to pick up their own bat (<u>by the handle</u>) upon leaving the field. If a player gets on base while batting, the on-deck batter is required to pick up the bat (<u>by the barrel</u>) and return it to the dug out.
Umpires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must conduct a daily symptom assessment and remain home if symptomatic in the preceding 48 hours². Must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing <u>except</u> when the ball is in play¹. Must ensure social distancing during all meetings. Must wear face coverings (e.g. a mask) at all times. Must not exchange physical documents or touch equipment. Must be familiar with and enforce this protocol at all times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are strongly encouraged to wear gloves at all times. Regular hand sanitising is strongly recommended. Lineups should be verbally dictated to the umpire or written, photographed and texted to the umpire. <u>No paper lineups.</u> Umpires are encouraged to accompany all calls with extended visual signals to aid communication. Plate umpires should allow a minimum of one (1) metre behind the catcher while still being able to perform their duty.
Spectators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are <u>strongly discouraged</u> from attending games or training sessions at this time, especially if symptomatic². If present against advice, must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing while at the venue¹. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If present against advice, strongly recommended to wear face coverings (e.g. a mask) at all times. If present against advice, strongly recommended to use hand sanitiser on arrival at the venue.
Departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants must not congregate in groups or exchange items following a game or training session and must adhere to two (2) metre social distancing while departing a venue¹. Visiting team must be allowed to depart the venue first. Teams must submit a list of event attendees to Softball Ireland within 24 hours for contact tracing purposes³. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players, coaches, umpires and spectators are strongly encouraged to travel separately or with members of their own household only.

COVID-19 Officers

Each team should nominate a dedicated '**COVID-19 Officer**' who will have the responsibility of:

- Being a designated contact within their team should the WBSC or Softball Ireland guidance be updated;
 - Leading the implementation of WBSC and Softball Ireland guidance within their team;
 - Ensuring compliance of WBSC and Softball Ireland guidance within their team during all training sessions and games, and;
 - Submitting team lists to Softball Ireland within 24 hours of every game and training session, in order to aid in contact tracing.
- Teams should email their nominations for COVID-19 Officer to secretary@softball.ie before Thursday 2nd July 2020.

1 Social Distancing Recommendations

Softball Ireland recognises the WHO and HSE recommendations on social distancing, in particular the benefits of decreasing viral transmission of COVID-19 through respiratory droplets. For this reason Softball Ireland has made the following social distancing recommendations for all events, games and training sessions:

- A physical distance of two (2) meters is recommended at all times for all players, umpires and coaches, except for;
- A physical distance of one (1) meter is permitted for plate umpires when the ball is being pitched;
- A physical distance of under one (1) meter is permitted by defensive players if they are in the process of making a play.

General Hygiene and Hand Washing Tips (HSE Advice)

- ✓ Wash your hands properly and often (for 2 minutes).
- ✓ Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or the crease of your elbow when you cough and sneeze.
- ✓ Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

- ✗ Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- ✗ Do not share objects that touch your mouth - for example bottles, cups etc.

2 Signs and Symptoms of COVID-19 (HSE/HSC Advice)

- Fever (or a temperature greater than 38°C)
- Cough (any cough, not just a dry cough)
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of sense of smell (or taste)

3 GDPR Declaration

- Information collected will be Full Name only.
- Information will be collected via SurveyMonkey.
- Information will be held by Softball Ireland for six weeks.
- If requested, the information held by Softball Ireland will be shared with the HSE, HSC or other government bodies in order to facilitate the contact tracing process.

4 High Risk Groups (HSE Advice)

- are over 60 years of age
- have a learning disability
- have a lung condition that is not severe (e.g. asthma)
- have heart disease (e.g. heart failure)
- have high blood pressure
- have diabetes
- have chronic kidney disease
- have liver disease
- have a medical condition that can affect your breathing
- have cancer
- are immunosuppressed
- have cerebrovascular disease
- have a condition affecting your brain or nerves
- have a problem with your spleen or had it removed
- have a condition that makes you high risk for getting infections
- taking medicine that can affect your immune system
- have obesity
- are in specialist disability care and are aged over 50

5 Very High Risk Groups (HSE Advice)

- are over 70 years of age
- have had an organ transplant
- are undergoing chemotherapy for cancer
- are having radiotherapy for lung cancer
- have cancers of the blood or bone marrow
- are having immunotherapy or antibody treatments for cancer
- are having other targeted cancer treatments which can affect the immune system
- have had bone or stem cell transplants in the last 6 months
- severe respiratory conditions (e.g. cystic fibrosis)
- have a condition that makes you very high risk for getting infections
- are taking medicines that make you more likely to get infections (e.g. high dose steroids)
- have a serious heart condition while pregnant

6 Hand Sanitiser Advice

- Any player who has a reaction (e.g. allergy, dermatitis) to the provided hand sanitiser is advised to bring their own supply for use.

It is expected that all teams will comply with the **mandatory** modifications **in full** and are **strongly advised** to follow the **recommended best practice** modifications to ensure the safety of players, officials and spectators.