

MILTON COED SLO PITCH

Return to Play

COVID-19

Guidelines

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Introduction

Milton Slo Pitch remains committed to the safety of the baseball community in Milton. While we are anxious for the return of our game, reopening baseball must take place within the context of the general reopening from COVID-19 closures occurring within the province. While we love baseball, the health and welfare of our participants must not be compromised. This document, as it may be updated from time to time, provides guidance on how baseball can return when it is deemed safe to do so by the Province of Ontario, municipal governments and public health authorities.

The principal purpose of this document is to provide a required framework and general recommendations to the Milton Slo Pitch community, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, for the safe return to baseball. The framework in this document is subject to all provincial emergency orders, advice and recommendations of public health authorities, municipal by-laws or other requirements, and requirements of facility owners. To the extent of any conflict between this framework and these other requirements, these other requirements prevail over the framework.

This document will be periodically updated as the provincial situation, recommendations and guidelines continue to evolve. As revisions are made, the most current version of the document will be located on the Milton Slo Pitch website. As updated from time to time, this document shall remain in full force and effect until such time as Slo Pitch National's Board of Management rescinds its provisions.

Who should read this document?

All participants (players, coaches, umpires, officials, volunteers) and their parents/guardians in the case of minors should familiarize themselves with the requirements and recommendations contained in this document prior to their return to baseball (training and competition) activities.

Players' Return to Activity

All players are required to conduct self-screening using the Covid Alert App prior to participating in any league function. The app can be downloaded at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

Players should not return to their baseball activities without considering the harmful effects of detraining. In fact, players may be exposed to situations of early fatigue due to reduced aerobic capacity or to injuries due to impaired muscle function, which can result in being counterproductive for his/her health.

When designing and carrying out physical exercise sessions, it will, therefore, be important to consider intensity, frequency, volume and method of exercise. A gradual increase is very important: after a period of reduced training, it is essential to understand the importance of following a period of gradual re-training. A resumption of physical activity by increasing both volume and intensity, but without modulating recovery periods, could lead to excessive fatigue or, in some cases, cause muscle injury or health problems.

The physical reconditioning should include a training program containing postural, stretching, core-stability and balance exercises to increase muscle tone and, at the same time, a program of endurance activities to improve aerobic capacity. Later, it would be appropriate to gradually introduce the sport's specific movements, and in particular throwing and arm care.

Until it is possible to return to full squad practices, outdoors and/or at the gym, the suggestion is to maintain an active lifestyle, by dedicating at least 45-60 minutes every day practicing activities that allow the maintenance of a good state of health combining aerobic activities with muscle strengthening and flexibility exercises. The workout intensity must vary according to individual physical and training conditions, as well as climatic conditions, possibly gradually increasing over time.

Recommended Standards

The list of protocols below set out the minimum standards for the organization of baseball events. While these guidelines will help mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infections -they cannot eliminate it completely. Persons, who do not feel safe in returning to baseball activities, are encouraged to refrain from doing so and will not be subject to any penalties or sanctions from Milton Coed Slo Pitch and/or Member Organizations.

General

(Applies to all practice, competition, team meetings or other in-person team activities)

Numbers:

- At no point will a baseball event exceed the number of attendees(including players, coaches, umpires, association officials, volunteers, parents and other family members) noted as the maximum number by the Province of Ontario, or any relevant municipality or public health authority.
- The number of participants involved should be reviewed and kept down to the absolute essential (e.g. Team members, Officials, Umpires, Event staff, Volunteers, etc.)
- Limit the number of non-participants attending (limit siblings, parents, extended family, friends, etc.).

As long as the maximum number of persons permitted to gather by the Province of Ontario and the relevant municipality and public health authority is less than or equal to 100, the maximum number of non-participants attending any event is limited to 1 per player. Such spectators shall physically distance themselves from other spectators and participants.

- If the Province of Ontario and/or municipalities or public health authorities establish different Stages of reopening in different areas of the province, the Stage established for the municipality where the team is located (i.e. home diamond) applies to that team. Travel by a team to another area of the province does not mean that the team can rely on the Stage of reopening of that other area.
- Coaching staff will keep an attendance tracker (written) for all practices, games and in-person activities including all players, coaches, umpires, parents and others in attendance, including name and contact information (e-mail or phone).
 - If the attendance tracker is done in written form, within 24 hours of the event, the coaching staff will provide the Executive with the information via google form. Local Associations and/or Select Associations will produce the attendance tracker to Milton Coed Slo Pitch, their Affiliated Association, Select Loop or Public Health upon request.

Screening/Diagnosed with COVID-19/Return from COVID-19:

- Self-screening through the **Covid Alert App** (which can be found at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>) is required by all participants, volunteers and spectators prior to attending any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and any individual shall not attend if they fail the screening protocol.
- A person, who is identified as part of an at-risk group, but otherwise passes the screening questions, is discouraged from participating in in-person baseball activities, but they are not considered to have failed the screening protocol.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 or who has been in contact with any person having COVID-19 in the previous 14 days MUST not attend any game, practice, meeting or other in-person team activity and MUST notify their local public health authority.
- Any participant, volunteer or spectator diagnosed with COVID-19 must be cleared by appropriate medical authorities prior to attending any in-person baseball activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to the Member Organization.

Emergency plan related to a positive or close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual:

- In the case that Milton Coed Slo Pitch is notified of a positive test or close contact with an individual within the league, we will: contact public health, review our contact tracking log, contact players affected within the previous 10 days, notify all players in the league of the situation, submit all logs to local municipality and public health, ensure affected players adhere to all public health guidelines, postpone or cancel games as required and cautiously return to play with all players safety at the top of our list.

Cleaning/Sanitization

(the following apply whereof the guidelines refer to cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting, wiping or similar terms):

- Teams are to have soap and water or 70% (or higher) alcohol hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes (or acceptable option) readily available at all times, and especially in any medical treatment areas. A list of recommended disinfectants is available on the Health Canada website:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>
- General cleaning shall be done with microfiber cloths and appropriate cleaning products from the

- previous bullet.
- General cleaning shall take place several times a day using different cleaning cloths for each type of object/surface (i.e. doors, tables, chairs, control panels such as those for scoreboards, remote controls, etc.)
 - All cleaning personnel (not including those individuals who work for the municipality or facility owner, who shall follow whatever guidelines are established by their employer) shall be protected appropriately with face mask and protective gloves at a minimum. This applies to the cleaning of facilities and/or equipment in accordance with the requirements of this document.
 - Those not involved in the cleaning/sanitization shall stay a minimum of 2 meters away from the cleaning/sanitization activities.
 - Cleaning/sanitization products will not be used by or stored within access of young children. ▪ Where this document requires the use of protective gloves, this shall mean PPE gloves and not batting gloves or baseball mitts.

Implementation of Safe Physical Distance:

- Maintain minimum of 2 meters distancing during physical activity, including warm ups, pre-game and post-game activities, wherever possible.
- Use of dugouts should be avoided where safe physical distance cannot be maintained ▪ Use as much space as required outside the dugout (but in safe areas outside of the field of play) to maintain adequate physical distance
- Avoid congestion at points of entry to the diamond (i.e. gates, dugout doors, etc.) to allow maintenance of 2 meters distancing among participants
- If spectators are in attendance, specific spectator measures for physical distancing shall be set as required/recommended by the local public health authorities.

Establishment of Hygiene Standards:

- Clean hands at least every inning for games or every 30 minutes or after handling shared equipment at practices
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth with your hands
- Sneeze and/or cough in a tissue or the internal crease of the elbow. Avoid contact of hands with personal respiratory points
- All potentially infected waste (i.e. disposable tissues, masks, protective gloves, etc.), hygiene material, rubbish, debris, etc., in all shared spaces (diamonds, dugouts, washrooms, change rooms, etc.) shall be disposed of safely at the end of the in-person baseball activity.

Spectators:

- If/when spectators are allowed, make sure to follow local authorities' guidelines strictly ▪ Ensure physical distance from participants and between spectators
- Spectators are encouraged to bring their own chairs for personal use or bring disinfectant wipes to clean the area where they sit. Municipalities and/or facility owners may or may not be cleaning bleachers on a regular basis.
- Spectators are encouraged not to wander to other areas of the park in which the diamond is located.

Thunderstorms:

- If a baseball event is interrupted by thunder, participants, volunteers and spectators are to return to their motor vehicles until the baseball event is cancelled or able to resume. If someone does not

have a motor vehicle, they may shelter in a safe location but must maintain a minimum of 2 meters distancing from others, if possible.

Equipment:

- Sharing of equipment such as batting helmets, catchers' masks, or other equipment likely to have been exposed to respiratory droplets should be avoided. Each player should have his/her own bat, helmet, baseball mitt(s), batting gloves, rosin bags, etc. and store these items inside their personal bag when not in use.
 - Equipment that must be shared must be cleaned/sanitized between players' use.
- Avoid personal clothing, equipment or electronics etc. being left in common places. Store inside personal bag always.

- PPE may be worn at the discretion of the participant (recommended that it not be white or grey). ▪ Rules of acceptable behaviour cannot be contravened.
- General equipment (eg. L-screens, field maintenance equipment, bases) must be wiped down between groups if it must be shared

Participants:

Participation by those in high-risk demographics (elderly and those with chronic conditions or who are immune compromised) is discouraged.

- No spitting, including tobacco and other products
- No sunflower seeds or chewing gum
- No sharing of water/energy drink bottles or food
- No shared water jugs, coolers or drink dispensers
- No handshakes, fist or chest bumps, high fives, hugs, kisses, etc.

Competition

Sports activity and life in general have been significantly affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in place across the globe. Although baseball is moderate in contact, there are several factors that each Member Organization will need to evaluate. Our traditional ways of competing will need to be altered in many instances to allow us to be back on the field of play while minimizing the risk of infection. The protocols listed under General and Practice also apply to Competition. Below are some competition specific protocols to be implemented by all Member Organizations.

Pre-game:

- Except as noted in the following bullet point, the two teams may share the field for pre-game warm up provided physical distancing is maintained. Each team shall stay in the outfield area on its side of the field. Hitting whiffle balls in the outfield is not considered BP for purposes of the following bullet point.
- Only one team shall be on the field at a time for BP (on the diamond), and Infield or infield/outfield practice
- Avoid pre-game ceremonies (i.e. anthems, first pitch ceremonies, etc.)
- Minimum physical distance of 2 meters at Home Plate meeting. Meeting is limited to 1 coach from

each team and 1 umpire.

- Line up cards must be prepared but will not be physically shared - photos may be taken by scorekeepers etc. and the lineup card must be made available to show the umpire when requested

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Baseballs:

- The defensive team will maintain control of the game balls used while they are on defense. Defensive team will need to chase all foul balls while they are in the field. Members of the offensive team are not to touch the baseballs of the defensive team.

Bats:

- No bat boys/girls shall be allowed
- If batter is not able to retrieve his/her own bat, a team representative of at least 16 years of age shall pick-up wearing protective gloves. Team representative shall apply hand sanitizer and/or wash hands upon conclusion of the half inning.

Other Equipment:

- Masks worn by pitchers, when they so choose, will be assessed as per existing rules regarding distracting colours, etc. (recommended that it not be white or grey). Rules of acceptable behaviour cannot be contravened.
- No sharing of catcher's masks in warming up pitchers. If no catcher's mask is readily available, warm up pitches may be thrown to a player/coach who is standing, but not squatting.
- A safety base may be used at first base. It is not mandatory to use it. The home team will determine if it is to be used for a particular game.

Umpires:

- Ball/Strike umpire to work 2 meters behind the pitcher
- Umpire(s) will not hold game balls
- If the umpire touches a ball, the use of hand sanitizer every half inning is recommended
- Umpires may wear PPE masks at their discretion

Score Keepers/Pitch Counters:

- Should always work from a restricted area and keep safe distance from others and from each other. If using a scorer's booth, it must be cleaned/sanitized before and after use.
- Avoid paper scoring/pitch counting when possible. Prioritize electronic scoring programs as alternative
- Scoring equipment and microphones, if applicable, shall be thoroughly cleaned before and after use

In-Game:

- Players shall not lick their fingers, blow on their hands or otherwise go to their mouth ▪ In order to

- maintain physical distancing between fielders and base runners, lead-offs are prohibited at
- Tag plays are allowed, but the defensive player should vacate the area as soon as reasonably practicable following the tag.
 - Defensive teams should avoid throwing the ball around the infield after outs.

Best Practices

The following, while not mandatory requirements are suggested best practices or other considerations which Member Organizations and their teams should take into consideration with respect to in-person baseball activities:

- Run drills with players in groups of 3 to 4 (maintain groups intact throughout all practices to minimize number of interactions)
- Consider split squad practices with no physical cross-over between sessions
- Each player to have their own portable chair that is not shared
- Minimize number of coaches in order to maximize players
- Distribute practice plan in advance to reduce the need for huddles / close communication
- Group rotation in one direction (i.e. clockwise around field)
- Use of protective gloves and personal face masks by all event personnel, participants (where feasible), and spectators.
- Use of physical barriers (e.g. Plexiglas) at points of interaction between event personnel and spectators (e.g. entry gate or ticket stand)
- [Encourage good handwashing techniques \(Link\)](#)
- [Encourage proper mask usage: How to wear a mask safely \(Link\)](#)

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Enforcement:

It is the expectation of Milton Coed Slo Pitch that all participants, volunteers, spectators and directors will respect these protocols and adheres to them not only for their own safety, but for the safety of all participants. Failure to abide by these rules will come with repercussions. Member Organizations and participants are expected to enforce these protocols for their in-person baseball activities. Except where a protocol identifies a specific sanction or penalty, enforcement should be by way of a warning against the violator and then a request to leave the in-person activity in the case of repeated violation. Member organizations not following these protocols may result in discipline for the Member Organization, up to and including, expulsion from Milton Coed Slo Pitch. Intentional violations of these protocols by individuals may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, suspensions.