



**Return-To-Play  
COVID-19 Guidelines**

**Revision Status**

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## **Introduction**

London Lightning Girls Fastball remains committed to the safety of the softball community in Ontario. While we are anxious for the return of our game, reopening softball must take place within the context of the general reopening from COVID-19 closures occurring within the province. While we love softball, 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 softball 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 of London Lightning Girls Fastball during the global COVID-19 pandemic, for the safe return to softball. 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 sent out to all coaches and the association members. As updated from time to time, this document shall remain in full force and effect until such time as London Lightning Girls Fastball rescind 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 softball (training and competition) activities. London Lightning Girls Fastball has developed their own specific written policies and operating protocols approved by their own board of directors. Such policies and protocols must be compliant with PWSA guidelines together with municipal and provincial legislation and COVID-19 specific policies issued by government and local public health authorities. Changes to such legislation and policies should be monitored closely and the policies updated as required, ensuring that they are applying the required standard of care and complying with local requirements.

## **Recommended Standards**

The list of protocols below set out the minimum standards for the organization of softball 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 softball activities, are encouraged to refrain from doing so and will not be subject to any penalties or sanctions from the PWSA and/or London Lightning Girls Fastball.

### **Numbers:**

- At no point will a softball 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.).
- 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 City of London where the team is located 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. All London Lightning teams will respect the Stage of the other area and if more restrictive than their home region, they will observe that protocol.

### **Screening/Diagnosed with COVID-19/Return from COVID-19**

- Coaching staff will be responsible for keeping Attendance Records via the Online Attendance/Health Log. This Attendance Log will list all participants/parents/family members.
- Each person entering the park will fill in a copy of the London Lightning Covid-19 Active Screening Tool via the online app. This document will include names and contact information (E-mail and/or Phone). Every player, coach, umpire and volunteer must complete the form before entering the activity. This record will be kept for 60 days. If the on-line app is unavailable – paper copies will be used including signatures.
- Upon entry to the park (or any in person activity) you will be required to submit the Active Screening Tool completed in entirety. Failure to complete the form in entirety will be cause for non-entry to the event.
- 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 softball activity. Evidence of the clearance needs to be provided to London Lightning Girls Fastball at least 2 hours before the event.

## **Cleaning/Sanitization**

- Teams are always to have soap and water and/or 70% (or higher) alcohol hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes (or acceptable option) readily available, and especially in any medical treatment areas.
- General cleaning shall be done using paper towels or microfiber cloths and appropriate cleaning products.
- General cleaning shall take place several times a day using new paper towels and/or 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.
- Only adults 18 and over shall perform cleaning/sanitization functions.
- Those not involved in the cleaning/sanitization shall stay a minimum of 9 feet 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 softball mitts.

## **Implementation of Safe Physical Distance:**

- Maintain a minimum of 9 feet distance during physical activity, including warmups, 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 9 feet 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. Spectators will not be permitted in the stands/bleachers. While at the ballpark, spectators will be required to view from the grass outfield area of the park only.
- The use of pylons or other delineation markers may be used to safely mark off areas that should not be accessed, as well as helping to provide marked areas for travel to and from diamonds, etc.

### **Establishment of Hygiene Standards**

- Hand sanitizer will be available at the entry/exit of the venue. Each team will be required to bring their own sanitizer for benches and team use. Visiting teams will be advised in advance.
- Wash or sanitize hands at least every inning for games or every 30 minutes at practices after handling shared equipment for at least twenty (20) seconds
- 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 softball activity.

### **Venues:**

- An emphasis will be placed on providing safe travel areas to reduce contact between individuals.
- Participants, volunteers, and spectators for a subsequent event shall remain in their motor vehicle in the parking lot until participants, volunteers and spectators from the prior event have returned to their motor vehicles.
- For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their dugout before and after games.
- Washrooms are to be open and accessible only at the discretion and direction of the city or facility owner where the venue is located.
- Under no circumstances will local acceptable usage limits established by facility owners (i.e. accessing off limits areas of parks or other facilities etc.) be violated.
- The bench/dugout area is for coaches and “Bench Parent” (responsible for disinfecting). Players will have marked out areas on the team’s side behind the bench/dugout. Players are encouraged to bring their own chair and keep equipment in their bag when not in use.
- Players will avoid contact when using the gates to enter or exit the playing field.
- Thorough disinfection of common spaces before/after use including:
  - Frequently touched areas of dugouts, including aluminum benches, bat racks and helmet racks
  - Door handles, fence/gate latches
  - Any other spaces that come into frequent touch

### **Spectators:**

- If/when spectators are allowed, make sure to follow local authorities' guidelines strictly
- Ensure physical distance from participants and between spectators
- Spectators must be 20 feet beyond the bases (at first and third base).
- Spectators are encouraged to bring their own chairs for personal use. Bleachers are not for spectators.
- Spectators are encouraged not to wander to other areas of the park in which the diamond is located.
- Players that are not dressed for the game are considered spectators.
- Consider wearing face masks for entering park/complex

### **Equipment:**

Sharing of equipment such as batting helmets, catchers' masks, or other equipment likely to have been exposed to respiratory droplets is not permitted. Each player will have her own bat, helmet, glove, batting gloves, etc. and store these items inside their personal bag when not in use.

- Avoid personal clothing, equipment or electronics etc. being left in common places. Store inside a personal bag always.
- PPE may be worn at the discretion of the participant.
- All catchers MUST wear a protective facial mask.
- All batters and baserunners MUST wear a protective facial mask.
- Catcher's helmets and fielding masks may have PWSA approved Lexan face shields if the player chooses instead of a protective facial mask.
- Rules of acceptable behavior cannot be contravened.
- General equipment (e.g. field maintenance equipment, bases) must be wiped down between groups if it must be shared
- Each player must keep their equipment isolated at a 9 feet distance to reduce coming in contact with equipment of other players.

### **Participants:**

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

- No spitting, 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.
- 9 feet distancing when entering / exiting the park.
- Apply sunscreen and bug spray once before leaving the car to join the practice or game.

## **Competition (Exhibition Games)**

Sports activity and life in general have been significantly affected by COVID-19 prevention measures in place across the globe. Although softball is moderate in contact, there are several factors that each 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 prior also apply to Competition. Below are some competition specific protocols to be adhered to.

### **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.
- Avoid pre-game ceremonies (i.e. anthems, first pitch ceremonies, etc.) Consider a practiced, in-sync clap collectively as a team, touch dirt/ a cheer/ synchronically hand gesture
- Minimum physical distance of 9 feet 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.
- Coin flip is virtual or done with social distancing

### **Softballs:**

- The defensive team will supply their own game balls. The umpire will not hold extra balls. When the team exits the field defensively, they are to take their own softball to the dugout.
- 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 or spectators are not to touch the softballs of the defensive team.

### **Bats:**

- No bat boys/girls shall be allowed.
- If a batter is not able to retrieve her own bat, a team representative of at least 18 years of age shall pick-up. The team representative shall apply hand sanitizer and/or wash hands upon conclusion of putting down the bat.



### **Other Equipment:**

- No sharing of catcher's masks in warming up pitchers.
- No sharing of any personal equipment.

### **Umpires:**

- 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
- Umpires are to follow the Strategic Return to Play Guidelines from Softball Ontario' Umpires Association. Web address:  
[https://mcusercontent.com/9654d66e40022d9a8a96228d2/files/36d1809c-6cb6-427b-b68b-c34c86c92723/Strategic\\_Return\\_to\\_Play\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/9654d66e40022d9a8a96228d2/files/36d1809c-6cb6-427b-b68b-c34c86c92723/Strategic_Return_to_Play_Guidelines.pdf)

### **Scorekeepers**

- Should always work from a restricted area and keep safe distance from others and from each other.
- Electronic scoring programs should be used as much as possible. Avoid paper scoring when possible.

### **In-Game**

- Players shall not lick their fingers, blow on their hands, or otherwise go to their mouth
- 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.
- The on-deck batter will ensure proper distancing from defensive players on the diamond. If they are unable to do so, they will be moved behind the backstop screen.

### **Coaches**

- Team meetings, including pitching visits, shall maintain physical distance of minimum 9 feet. A maximum of 1 person (coach or player) and the pitcher may be included in a pitching visit.
- If a coach must approach an umpire, physical distancing of at least 9 feet must be maintained. Failure to do so may result in ejection.
- While on offence, base coaches must always stay within their box, except to avoid a play being made in the coach's box. Any discussions between coaches and players (e.g. batter visiting 3rd base coach; coach talking to runners, etc.) must maintain physical distancing of at least 9 feet.

- Pitchers, catchers, spotters, and bullpen coaches must always maintain a physical distance of 9 feet while pitchers are warming up in the bullpen

### **Medical**

- If medical personnel are on hand, they should be the primary tending to medical issues arising on the field unless further assistance is required.
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (mask and gloves) must be used by trainers (or persons performing trainer function) when assessing an injury
- The number of individuals attending to an injured player should be as few as possible (based on the severity of the injury). Sufficient PPE along with a sufficient first aid kit should be provided to the medical people to assist the injured player and remain safe.
- Players injured during the game should be taken to a safe area (ie. Bleachers as they are not being used) where they can be socially distanced while being attended to.

### **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 softball 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 to maximize players
- Distribute practice plan 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.
- Encourage good handwashing techniques - [https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How\\_To\\_HandWash\\_Poster.pdf](https://www.who.int/gpsc/5may/How_To_HandWash_Poster.pdf)
- Encourage proper mask usage: How to wear a mask safely - <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

### **Enforcement:**

It is the expectation of London Lightning Girls Fastball that all participants, volunteers, spectators, and directors will respect these protocols and adhere 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. Participants are expected to enforce these protocols for their in-person softball activities. Enforcement should be by way of a warning delivered by the respective coach against the violator and then a request to leave the in-person activity in the case of repeated violation. Individual players, coaches, teams not following these protocols will result in discipline for the

violation, up to and including expulsion from Softball Ontario. Intentional violations of these protocols by individuals may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, suspensions.

### DECLARATION OF COMPLIANCE

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Team \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge that:

1) The novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has been declared a worldwide pandemic by the World Health Organization and COVID-19 is extremely contagious. London Lightning Girls Fastball has put in place preventative measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19. However, London Lightning Girls Fastball cannot guarantee that I will not become infected with COVID-19.

2) I am participating voluntarily and understand the risks associated with the novel coronavirus, COVID 19 and agree to assume those risks.

3) I have read the London Lightning Girls Fastball Association's Return to Play Protocols and will follow all guidelines in that document.

4) I will complete a Covid-19 Active Screening Tool Document prior to all team events and understand that failure to do so means I will not be able to participate at that event.

5) This document will remain in effect until London Lightning Girls Fastball, per the direction of the provincial government and provincial health officials, determines that the acknowledgments in this declaration are no longer required.

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Signature (For those under 18, must be signed by legal guardian)