

Halton Badgers

**2021
RETURN TO
BASEBALL**

COVID-19
Guidelines



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Return to Baseball

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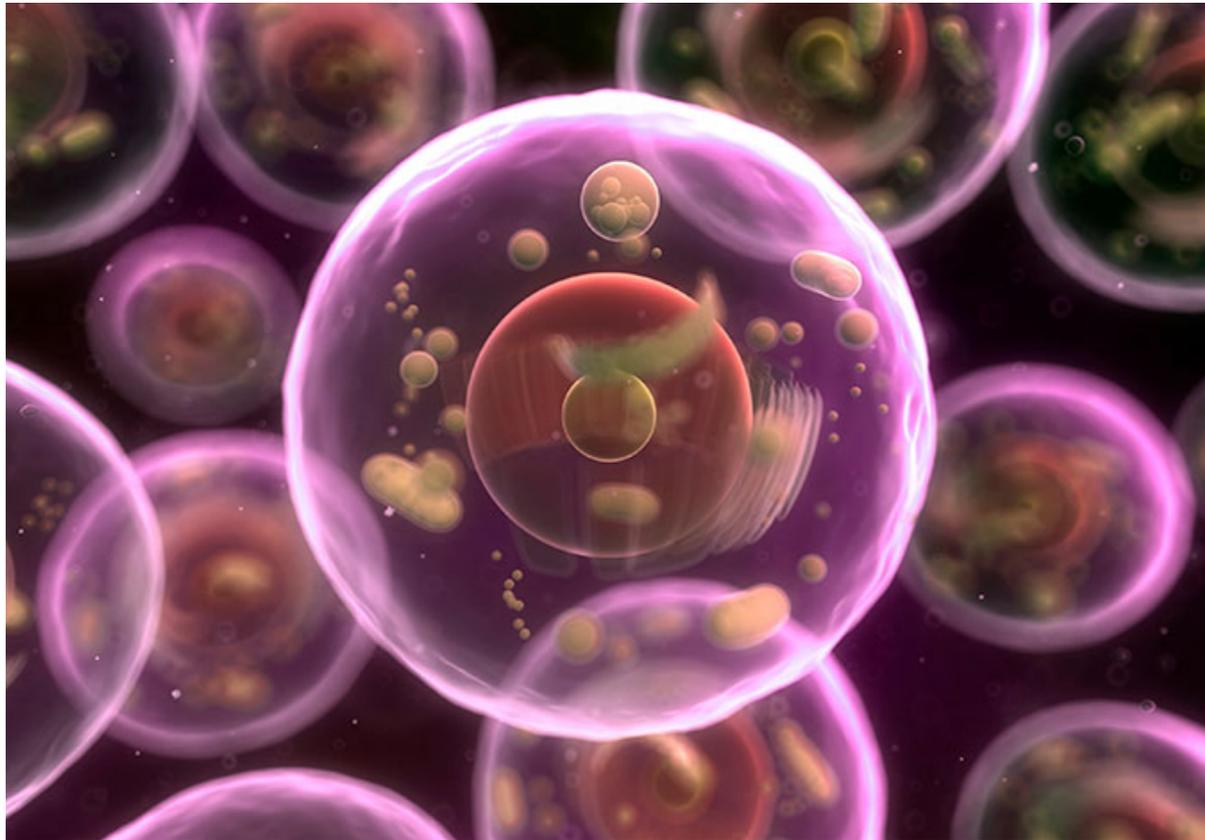
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INTRODUCTION:

Halton Badgers remains committed to the safety of the baseball community. 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 our 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 Halton Badgers 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 Halton Badgers website and membership will be advised through email and through our social media channels.

As updated from time to time, this document shall remain in full force and effect until such time as Halton Badgers or FJSL 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

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, Halton Badgers will, therefore, 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 sports 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.

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 or electronic) for all practices, games and in-person activities including all players, coaches, umpires, parents and other in attendance, including name and contact information (email or phone.) If the attendance tracker is done in written form

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

*Self-screening through <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/> is required by all participants, volunteer 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 or 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 Halton Badgers and FJSL.

*A designated team parent from each team will gather and log contact information for all players, coaches, parents, spectators, volunteers and umpires associated with Halton Badgers Baseball Club, prior to any game being started, and will update as people come and go throughout the day.

Cleaning/Sanitization (the following will apply whereof the guidelines refer to cleaning, sanitizing, disinfection, 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.

*General cleaning shall be done with microfibre cloths and appropriate cleaning products from the previous bullet.

*General cleaning shall take place several times a day using differing cleaning cloths for each type of surface/subject (i.e. doors, tables, chairs, control panels such as those for scoreboards, remote controls etc, if applicable)

*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.

*At 15U and below, only adults shall perform cleaning/sanitization functions.

*Those not involved in the cleaning/sanitization shall stay a minimum of 2 metres 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 metres 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 metres 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:

*Wash hands at least every inning for games or every 30 minutes at practices after handling shared baseballs, for at least 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 baseball activity.

Venues/Entry/Exit:

*Scheduling of diamond must allow for a minimum of 45 minutes between the conclusion of the prior event and the start of the subsequent event to allow for: (1) the team(s) involved in the prior event to clean/sanitize equipment, dispose of garbage from common areas, and have all team members vacate the facility BEFORE (2) the team(s) involved in the subsequent event enter the facility and clean/sanitize common areas; without crossover between the teams participating in the two events. In the case of games, this may require Halton Badgers to establish appropriate "drop dead" or "no new inning" rules to allow for safe crossover between events.

*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. Halton Badgers should designate appropriate waiting areas for any participants, volunteers and spectators not arriving in motor vehicles.

*For games, both the home team and the visiting team are responsible for cleaning/sanitizing their dugout before and after the games. It is recommended that change rooms/clubhouses not be used. If it is necessary to use them, physical distancing requirements shall be observed. The team using the change room/clubhouse shall clean/sanitizing it before and after use.

*Washrooms are to be open and accessible only at the discretion and direction of the municipality or facility owner where the venue is located.

*Snack bars/Concessions/Canteens are prohibited from being operated until the provincial limit on gatherings is at least 250 persons. These facilities, if operated by the municipality or facility owner, would be subject to the rules and protocols of the appropriate provincial ministry/governing agency.

*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.

*Modified dugout use. Athletes must be set up outside of the dugout with physical distancing requirements adhered to. A maximum of 3 people allowed in the dugout at one time. This does not include the on-deck batter. The purpose of allowing athletes in the dugout is to promote pace of play. Athletes should cycle through the dugout in conjunction with the batting order to keep the game moving. People in the dugout must always maintain 6 feet of separation.

***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
- Establishment of sanitation stations with alcohol based hand sanitizers at all entrances/exits to diamonds and complexes.

-Provide disinfectant wipes and advise event staff and volunteers to disinfect door handles, fence or gate latches, and any other spaces that come into frequent touch in all areas several times per day. Where the municipality or facility owner does not provide maintenance staff to complete these duties several times per day, it is the responsibility of the Halton Badgers to do so.

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.

*Car pooling to be discouraged whenever possible.

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 metres distancing from other, if possible.

Practice (applicable to practices and games)

Practice or training is a more controlled environment than the game environment. Practice can also accommodate fewer numbers of participants than games. Accordingly, it is envisioned that return to practice will likely occur prior to return to play. The protocols listed under General also apply to practice. Below are some practice specific protocols to be implemented by Halton Badgers..

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. Sharing of equipment, other than baseballs, is forbidden. Baseballs will be cleaned/sanitized between innings.

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

*No spitting, including seeds, gum, chewing tobacco or other products

*No sunflower seeds or chewing gum

*No sharing of water/energy drink bottles or food

*No sharing of equipment, water jugs, coolers or 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 measure in place across the globe. Although baseball is moderate in contact, there are several factors that the Halton Badgers 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.

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 it's 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 metres 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.

Baseballs:

*Ball prep (mud rubbing) to be done by one appointed personnel. No use of saliva in preparing balls.

*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. Team representative will then apply hand sanitizer right away.

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 catchers' 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 metres behind pitcher. If back stop does not allow this distance, the ball/strike umpire will stand behind 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 18U and below.

*Tag plays are allowed, but the defensive player should vacate the area as soon as reasonable practicable following the tag.

*Defensive teams should avoid throwing the ball around the infield after outs.

Coaches:

*Team meetings, including pitching visits, shall maintain physical distance of minimum 2 metres. A maximum of 1 person (coach or player) and the pitcher may be included in a pitching visit.

*Use of PPE (visor, mask, gloves) must be used by trainers (or persons performing training functions) when assessing an injury.

*If a coach must approach an umpire, physical distancing of at least 2 metres 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 (eg. batter visiting 3rd base coach; coach talking to runners, etc) must maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres.

*Pitchers, catchers, spotters and bullpen coaches must always maintain a physical distance of 2 metres while pitchers are warming up in the bullpen.

Tournaments: (including regular season tournaments and affiliated association playoffs):

*Tournaments would need to comply with all Competition requirements.

*Opening Ceremonies and/or Medal Ceremonies are prohibited until such time as the provincial limit on gatherings is at least 250 persons.

Best Practices:

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

- *Run drills with players in groups of 3-5 (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.
- *Group rotation in one direction (i.e. clockwise around field.)
- *Suggested use of protective gloves and personal face masks by all event personnel, participants (where feasible) and spectators.
- *Encourage good hygiene.

Enforcement:

It is the expectation of Halton Badgers that all participants, volunteers, spectators and directors will respect those 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. Halton Badgers 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. If Halton Badgers participants, volunteers, spectators and directors do not follow these protocols, it may result in discipline for the Halton Badgers Baseball Club, up to and including, expulsion from FJSL. Intentional violations of these protocols by individuals may result in disciplinary action, up to and including, suspensions.

Following Any In Person Practice/Game/Meeting/Competition:

If you contract Covid-19 after participating in return to play (ie: game or practice) or it is unknown where you may have contracted it from. **Please follow Provincial protocol and notify your head coach immediately.** Your head coach will then notify recent opponents, players, coaches, parents, spectators, volunteers and umpires .

YOU SHOULD NOT ATTEND A HALTON BADGERS OR FJSL EVENT OR ACTIVITY IF YOU FEEL SICK

Screening Questionnaire for COVID-19 - If you have 2 or more of the following symptoms, stay home, self isolate and call your local Covid-19 testing facility:

- Fever or signs of a fever (such as chills)
- New cough or worsening of a chronic cough
- Sore throat
- Headache
- Runny nose
- New onset of fatigue or muscle pain

- Diarrhea
- Loss of taste or smell

If you answer YES to any of the following, then you must stay home and self isolate for 14-days. If you develop symptoms or test positive for COVID-19,

YOU MUST NOTIFY YOUR TEAMS HEAD COACH IMMEDIATELY.

- Have you had close contact within the last 14 days with a confirmed case of COVID-19?
- Have you been diagnosed with COVID-19?
- Have you returned from travel outside of Ontario within the last 14 days?
- Have you been told by public health that you may have been exposed to COVID-19?
- Follow public health advice if you are waiting for testing results for COVID-19

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>

COVID-19 Bubble League (Potential)

As per Provincial Guidelines and recommendations, the Fergie Jenkins showcase league will likely be running games in a bubble format. This means that our age divisions will be booked into 3 and 4 team groupings, as opposed to 9 or 10. The teams in each bubble will play each other for the entire season. This keeps the numbers at 50 in a bubble and minimizes the risk of contacting and spreading COVID. With respect to all other COVID-19 protocols, all continue to be implemented until Covid is no longer deemed an issue. These numbers are subject to change based on Provincial Guidelines.

