

Return to Play Guidelines for Saint Louis Park Little League

Saint Louis Park Little League will defer to Little League International including following the 43 page return to play guidelines.

Below is a message from the Little League International Website:

Following the latest recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to refrain from gatherings for at least eight weeks, the leadership at Little League International chose the May 11 to coincide with that guidance. Our first recommendation was April 6, however, we are now advising all leagues suspend/delay their activities until May 11. It is **highly encouraged that each league and district adheres to the guidelines set forth by their respective state and local government and health officials in terms of public gatherings and sporting events when determining when it is safe to return to normal activities after May 11. Leagues should contact their local health authority for guidance prior to resuming any Little League activities.**

After May 11th Little League International defers to State and Local leadership on returning to play.

The 2020 Season

It is essential that all participants understand participating in youth sports is a risk for physical harm and a potential for sickness. The parents of participants must weigh this decision. Our participants will need to be mindful of the factors of public health, social distancing, and societal well-being.

Based on the highly contagious nature of Covid 19. The safety guidelines listed below are proposed as additional measures to be taken before, during, and after a little league baseball practice or game. All other key prevention strategies by the CDC and Minnesota Department of Health will be strictly followed in order to promote a safe and healthy social distancing. Saint Louis Park Little League will be adopting the following items. These items are subject to change based on new information. For the 2020 season:

- It will be requested that parents, before dropping off players at practice or game, take the temperature of their player. If a player is outside of temperature guidelines they do not participate. We are investigating the possibility of having hand scanning thermometers at the field to take participants temperatures.
- Anyone displaying Covid-19 symptoms will be sent home.
- It will be requested that players and coaches wash their hands prior to going to practice or a game. We are investigating the possibility of having touchless hand sanitizing station available for players.
- It will be requested that parents review with their players a short document on how to properly social distance and will be required to sign a waiver.
- Sitting bleachers will be closed for the 2020 season.
- Spectators will be required to lineup along the foul line and outfield fences.
- On Saturday and Sundays there will be one hour between games in order to prep field and wipe down benches. Teams will not be able to get into the dugout until 30 minutes before game time.
- The 2020 regular season will be an in house league only. We will not play other associations during the regular season.

- For players under 9 years of age it will be requested that parents remain at the practice field in order to help ensure players properly socially distance from each other.
- It will be requested of parents to provide their player with their own batting helmet. If a parent is unable to provide their player a helmet it will be issued by the league.
- All players will be required to have their name in their hat.
- There will be no concessions offered at Skippy or Northside Park.
- There will be no restrooms available at Skippy or Northside Park.
- There will be no water fountains at Skippy or Northside Park.
- Pre-game lineups will be exchanged electronically between coaches.
- Umpires calling balls and strikes will be behind the mound.
- The post-game handshake will be eliminated and turned into a tipping of the cap to the opposing team.
- Each team will be provided with two sets of catcher gear and for a game two players will be identified as the catcher for that game. In between games catchers gear will be wiped down with a sanitizing agent.
- Defensive teams will provide baseballs while they are in the field.
- Bats will be placed against the fence and wiped down with a sanitizing agent prior to pregame.
- Coaches will wear batting or other type of glove
- Coaches will be trained on staying 6 feet apart from players
- There will be assigned seating in the dugout with extension of the dugouts behind the field.
- The catcher position will be eliminated in the machine pitch level (rookie and a).
- As it is difficult to control 5 and 6 year old players. Rookie teams will play 1 hr games preceded by half hour practice. We are investigating whether there will be practices outside of game day. Potentially send weekly drills to families to practice at home.
- We will recommend that coaches wear masks but cannot enforce usage.
- We will recommend that players wear masks but cannot enforce usage.

Below is a PHASED APPROACH FOR RETURN TO PLAY

PHASE I

Groups of 10-15 will need to follow appropriate physical distancing. Baseball is an outdoor sport with our participants occupying natural positions that are greater than social distancing standards.

This will allow for youth baseball teams to start practicing.

PHASE II

The cap on the number of people at gatherings rises to 50, which would be enough for games. Vulnerable populations should continue to follow stay home guidance.

This will allow for baseball teams to begin conducting games.

PHASE III

There are no limits on group sizes. The sports go back to normal participation and operation. Vulnerable populations can resume public interactions, but should practice physical distancing, and continue to take precautionary measures.

GAMES PLAYED IN PHASE II

Entering or Exiting Fields: If possible, all players, coaches, and umpires will enter through one entrance and exit through another, observing state guidelines for social distancing. This scenario replicates the path of travel through grocery stores. In the event there is only one entrance to the park, teams will need to be cautious and courteous at the point of entry, observing all social distancing rules.

Social Distancing: Parents and spectators have separate seating away from the backstop or dugout. Spectators will not be allowed around the area of the backstop or dugouts. Only players, up to three coaches per team, and the umpire(s) are allowed on the field of play. Spectators are only permitted to view the game from the outfield. This means the game may be viewed along the foul lines starting at 1st/3rd base extending to the outfield and in the outfield area.

Proposed Spectator Options:

Social distancing guidelines would apply (for example, must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator).

Only immediate families/households of the players will be allowed to spectate the game.

Each family/household must be 6 feet from the next group/spectator.

Dugout (Team Personnel): The dugout will be extended to behind the dugout to the backstop for both teams. This is to allow rostered players and up to three coaches per team to practice social distancing throughout the game while their team is up to bat. Hand and equipment sanitizing between innings is recommended. No more than 3-5 individuals are permitted in the dugout at any given time (this is dependent on the size of the dugout). These individuals (players, coaches or any combination) must maintain all social distancing guidelines throughout the game. All other team personnel must practice social distancing in the extended area of the dugout, as referenced above.

Game Protocol: At the pregame meeting and throughout the game, coaches and umpires will not be allowed to shake hands or have any physical contact with each other. All parties must maintain social distancing guidelines. No physical contact or touching is permitted.

Players and coaches are asked to refrain from high fives or any other physical gestures of celebration. All team personnel must always maintain social distancing guidelines.

At the conclusion of the game, players will be asked to forego the sportsmanship line at the end of the game. Instead we are asking for each team to line up on their respective foul line and "tip their cap" as a salute to the other team to promote sportsmanship.

Equipment: It is highly recommended that team personnel carry hand sanitizer and disinfectant wipes with you to be used before, during and after the games, whenever appropriate, such as if/when you come into contact with the ball or any other players, coaches, or shared equipment (bases). Please wear

your batting gloves as much as possible, especially when handling a bat. Refrain from sharing equipment in general. This includes but is not limited to bats, helmets, and catcher's equipment.

Each team needs to provide their own baseballs for when they are in the field. Each team is responsible for switching out their baseballs each inning. Umpires: Umpires will be asked to officiate the game from behind the pitcher's mound, while practicing social distancing with all fielders. This will limit the number of people around home plate and will still allow the umpire to call the game and see the whole field. Umpires should not handle baseballs, and should wear gloves if they intend to handle baseballs

With the exception of tagging a runner out, we will ask participants to avoid intentional physical contact between players, coaches, and or fans. This includes handshakes and high fives on the field of play.

Team practice drills and game warm up activities will be designed to eliminate physical contact where possible, use small groups 2-6, and ensure 6ft distances are maintained whenever possible. For example:

- Tagging of runners will be eliminated from practices.

- There will be no catchers and batters simultaneously at home plate during practices.

- 6ft distances will be maintained in the batting cages with the coach picking up the balls.

Only umpires, players, and up to 3 coaches per team will be allowed on the field of play. Team rosters range from 10-13 players.

Umpires will call the game 6ft behind the pitcher's mound.

Dugouts will be expanded behind home plate and along the foul lines if needed to ensure all players and coaches will be positioned 6ft apart. Cones or chalked/painted lines will indicate the required spacing. No fans will be allowed in the expanded dugout area.

Coaches at 1st and 3rd base will be positioned 6ft or greater from the base path.

Mound visits, on field player huddles, and team meetings will be eliminated. If direction is given, coaches will use non-verbal signs or verbal direction while maintaining a 6ft distance.

Umpire and coach meetings will be kept brief and done while maintaining a 6ft distance.

Players and coaches will maintain a 6ft distance when performing drills or shagging balls.

Coaches will carry and handle all team game equipment.

Coaches will set up and break down the field before and after practices and games.

Opposing teams will enter and exit the field through separate instances. Players and coaches will enter and egress slowly to ensure physical distance is maintained.

All fans will be required to sit 6 feet apart along the outfield fence line starting at the bases. Cones or painted lines will indicate the required spacing. No fans will be allowed behind home plate and to the left of the dugout. That space will be used as an extended dugout.

Parents and/or guardians will be asked to wait in their car or away from the field for their player to emerge.

Both teams and fans must vacate the field prior to the next two teams and fans arriving.

Universal Precautions and Personal Protective Equipment

It will be recommended that every player, coach, umpire, and fan carry their own bottle of hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.

In addition, each team will have soap and sanitizer available for use on equipment and for players and coaches who are in need.

All players, coaches, and umpires will be asked to wash (with soap) and or sanitize hands prior to practice or the game, throughout the game as needed, and post the practice or game.

Only balls and team bats will be shared. Catcher gear will be wiped down and sanitized between games. There will be assigned catchers for games. Rookie and A league will eliminate catchers.

Gum, sunflower seeds, peanuts, and chewing tobacco will not be allowed anywhere on or near the field of play. This will prevent spitting and the need to clean up items that have been in someone's mouth.

No food will be allowed in the dugout or on the field of play.

No concessions or sales of food, drink or goods will occur at the fields.

All players, coaches and fans will be required to clean and remove all trash and items from their designated area.

During games, coaches will refrain from touching balls in play. The defensive team will provide the balls while they are in the field reducing cross contact between teams.

Umpires should not handle baseballs, and should wear gloves if they intend to handle baseballs/softballs. Change gloves after each use when handling baseballs.

Monitoring and escalation management

Parents, players, coaches, and umpires will be asked to closely monitor themselves and family members for symptoms or known direct (one to one) exposure to a person diagnosed with COVID-19. *We will ask all parties involved to notify the SLPLL Board immediately of any COVID-19 diagnosis, major symptoms, or direct one to one exposure. The St. Louis Park Little League Board will then follow CDC and MNDH guidelines on how to handle potential exposures while maintaining the health privacy of all involved.

Since these guidelines are fluid, we will not state them here. The following protocols will be followed at all times.

Any player, coach, umpire or fan diagnosed with COVID-19 will not be allowed on or near the field of play until they are provided with a note from a medical professional indicating they no longer require isolation.

Any player, coach, umpire or fan with a fever or clear respiratory symptoms will not be allowed on or near the field of play.

Any player, coach, umpire or fan who has been directly exposed (one to one) to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 will not be allowed on the field of play until 14 days have passed.

If the St Louis Park Little League Baseball board is notified that any player or coach of a St Louis Park team is diagnosed with COVID-19 we will follow CDC and MNDH notification and suspension protocols.

If we are notified of an umpire or player / coach from an opposing team is diagnosed with COVID-19 we will follow CDC and MNDH notification and suspension protocols.

Secondary exposure does not trigger the rules above. For example, a player's parent works in the medical field and it is known that they have had direct contact with COVID-19 patients in the past 14 days. This would not disqualify the player from participating.

Parents and players may make their own decisions to suspend participation at any time.

*It is important to note that St Louis Park Little League Board cannot require a person to be tested for COVID-19 or guarantee that, despite its best efforts to adhere to evolving guidelines from the CDC, MNDH and Governor of the State of Minnesota, there will no health risk associated with participation in a team sport. Accordingly, parents/guardians of all players wishing to participate in the 2020 season will be required, as a condition of participation, to provide a signed Waiver and Consent in the form of the following:

Waiver and Consent

I am the parent/guardian of _____ ("Participant"), the child who is the subject of this Waiver and Consent. I completed a medical release and liability waiver (the "Registration Waiver") as part of the on-line registration process of Participant for the 2020 baseball season sponsored by Saint Louis Park Little League. I acknowledge and agree that the Registration Waiver remains in full force and effect. Moreover, in light of the fact COVID-19 has been deemed a public health emergency in the United States and has been declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization, as a further condition of Participant being allowed to participate in the 2020 baseball season, I agree, on behalf of Participant and myself:

1. That the risk of potentially contracting illness (including, but not limited to, COVID-19 related illness) attributable to participation in the 2020 baseball season is being knowingly and voluntarily assumed;

2. That Participant and I will indemnify and hold the Saint Louis Park Little League harmless from any liability or losses arising out of illness (including, but not limited to, COVID-19 related illness) attributable to participation in the 2020 baseball season with the agreement that this indemnification/hold harmless commitment extends to all alleged acts or omissions by coaches, organizers, sponsors, volunteers, board members, supervisors, participants, transportation providers, umpires and any other persons involved in any way with the 2020 baseball season; and

3. That in the event Saint Louis Park Little League Board determines in its discretion that Participant is demonstrating symptoms of COVID-19 and/or has been directly exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19, Participant may not return to team activities until the passage of a minimum of 14 days and a written doctor's opinion from Participant's treating health care provider has been furnished to Saint Louis Park Little League Board certifying that Participant has been cleared to safely return.

_____, 2020 Parent/Guardian of Participant