



Northeast Elite Soccer League

Return to Play Guideline

Returning to play in a manner that maximizes the health and safety of our players and referees is of utmost concern. In coordination with US Soccer Federation “Play On” guidelines and the United States Adult Soccer Association, NESL has created a detailed best practice for use once play returns. This guideline is in supplement to any local jurisdiction or State Association requirements.

Please utilize the best practices and safety precautions described below that are strongly recommended for teams and players. These best practices and safety precautions should be viewed as minimum standards that should be met before play can be resumed. Additional safeguards and precautions, including decisions not to play matches may be appropriate based on community prevalence of COVID-19 or to comply with State or local public health directives and recommendations.

General Preparation

The NESL Commissioner and each team managers shall serve as points of contact responsible for regular review of local, state and current “Return To Play” guidelines and enforcement. It is imperative that team managers inform the NESL Commissioner of any changes to state and local regulations.

Teams need to devise and practice a “Contact Tracing” method. Maintain weekly records of attendance at scheduled games (and practices, if applicable) with corresponding rosters for tracing purposes. If possible, have each roster act as a roll call for the actual people in attendance to assist with contact tracing in case of an exposure.

General Precautions at the Field

Schedule games with enough time between as to minimize contact of the teams leaving and the teams arriving. Consider having separate designated entrances and exits to the field (e.g., enter through one gate, exit through a different gate).

In case of delay due to inclement weather have all players return to their personal vehicle; multiple players sheltering in one vehicle is strongly discouraged. Do not gather collectively under a gazebo or any other complex structure.

Have signage, or have a volunteer monitor or instruct players to limit how many players enter the restroom at one time. Understand the policies and procedures being followed by the complex at which your games are being played. How often does the restroom get cleaned? Will the restrooms have hand sanitizer? These are questions you should ask the complex management. Once learning these answers, communicate them to your members.

Matches should be held without fans and family members in attendance. If fans or family attend, they are NOT permitted to be with the team on the sidelines. Define an area away from the teams for spectators to view the match.

Game Time Precautions

If possible, have disinfectant spray available to wipe down game balls before matches, at halftime and at the end of the match.

Additional game time/game day precautions are described below in the Game Day section under Players' Responsibilities.

PLAYERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Do not play if:

- You are exhibiting **any** symptoms now of the COVID-19 illness caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2: fever or chills, cough, difficulty breathing, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, headaches, or other symptoms, mild to severe, identified by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).
- You have had COVID-19 symptoms such that COVID-19 was likely within the past 10 days, but you have not been tested, **(i.e., do not play unless it has been at least 10 days since you last had COVID-19 symptoms)**.
- You have had COVID-19 symptoms and have a COVID-19 test pending
- You tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 within the past 10 days even if you have not had any symptoms **(i.e., do not play unless it has been at least 10 days since you tested positive for COVID-19 AND it has been at least 10 days since you last had COVID-19 symptoms, if any)**.
- In the past 14 days you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 or with someone who has tested positive for SARS-CoV-2 in the last 14 days.
- You are deemed a "vulnerable individual" defined as "an individual with serious underlying health conditions, for example high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, compromised immune system (due to chemotherapy, or any other ailment or factor that causes immunodeficiency)."

2. Notification:

Communication is key. The player/players must notify the team manager if any of the above conditions apply to yourself or teammates. The team manager in turn must notify the NESL Commissioner.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or developed symptoms consistent with COVID-19 **AFTER** participating in a league function, meeting, practice, or game, you **must** notify your team captain and the NESL Commissioner **immediately**.

Note that your privacy will be protected, but the League shall notify your team, your opponents, the referees, and anyone else who you may have been in contact with at your match.

3. Game Day:

- Do the bulk of stretching prior to arriving.
- Stay in your car until 30 mins before your match time.
- Arrive wearing a mask. Consider having back-up masks due to sweat or weather conditions.
- Must bring your own water bottle. **NO SHARING WATER BOTTLES OR WATER COOLERS.** Dispose of bottles properly, do not leave on the pitch.
- Bring personal hand sanitizer.
- If possible, it is recommended that teams take the opposite sides of the field. Players are to go to their designated side of the field and do not stop to mingle with other individuals.
- While not playing, players should wear their mask until entering the field of play and return to wearing a mask after a reasonable cool down period while on the sidelines. Continue to practice 6' social distancing from teammates and other individuals.
- There will be no coin toss. Home team will decide "ball or side".
- During pre-game check-in with the referees - wear a facemask.
- At half time, players must return to wearing masks after a reasonable cool down.
- Teams continue to practice social distancing during half time.
- Referees must not be approached at half time or after the game for any reason. Comments to the referees should be made from a distance of at least 6 feet away.
- Confronting the referees during the match including "getting in the referee's face or approaching too close" will be viewed as dissent and the player may be given a yellow card.
- No shaking hands, fist bumps, or high fives.
- Players should be responsible for their own equipment, jersey, warm-ups, and bibs.
- Identify one individual from the team to be responsible for team equipment such cones and team balls.
- After the game please leave the complex immediately.

4. Disciplinary Actions

Any player, coach or team official who intentionally spits, coughs, fights or touches another player or referee is to be shown a red card and removed from the match. The individual will be suspended a minimum of three matches subject to additional sanctions, fines or other penalties determined by the NESL Arbitration Board.