

Return to Play Guidelines



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Introduction:

The Ottawa Nepean Touch Football League (ONTFL) has been in existence for over 50 years. Along with offering an outlet for socializing and exercise, player, coach, and community safety has always been a top priority for the league.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the physical and mental health of the community has been of concern as it relates to isolation, lack of socialization, and personal wellbeing. We recognize the risks associated with COVID and will implement measures to minimize them. This will allow our membership to come together to reap the benefits of community interaction and physical activity.

The ONTFL also recognizes the evolving and unknown nature of the COVID-19 situation and therefore this guideline will be updated, as needed, to ensure compliance with current and future public health requirements.

We don't have the resources of major sporting leagues, so we'll need managers and players to help us ensure that everyone follows our guidelines and rule changes.

Proposed Season (Orange Status)

- Multi-week 8 to 10 game league, plus playoffs, with minimal contact between participants.
- Games will consist of two 23 minute halves, plus 5 plays.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation and Return to Play Strategy

The ONTFL has put significant thought to its COVID-19 Risk Mitigation and Return to Play strategy to optimize the safety of all participants. All tactics and rules of participation were created with Ottawa and Ontario Public Health suggestions and must be strictly adhered to.

The following outlines the tactics within the Risk Mitigation and Return to Play Strategy:

- Players cannot attend any ONTFL sanctioned game if he or she has symptoms of COVID or has been in contact with someone that is confirmed to have COVID within the prior 21 days.
- We reserve the right to remove any player or team that fails to comply with these requirements.

Pre-participation Screening

- All teams are required to register online and must complete the amended league waiver form which will specifically reference contagious diseases. No team can participate without registering. Any team with an illegal player will automatically default that game.
- If a player feels ill or has symptoms, they are not to attend any games or venue.
- Players with preexisting medical conditions or at high risk of COVID (e.g. asthma) are encouraged not to participate.

Team Captain/Manager 3-Step Pre-Game Requirement

- Before each game, Team Managers will check temperatures of each player. The league will have temperature guns at the field. This is subject to change depending on equipment.
- Managers must check off an attendance sheet and COVID questionnaire. This will be included in manager packages.
- The team roster/COVID questionnaire will be used for contact tracing purposes.
- Ensure teammates use sanitizer before stepping on the field.

Infection Control

Hand Sanitizer

- Teams must bring their own hand sanitizer and every player must use it before the game, at half time and immediately after the game.
- The league will also provide sanitizer to each team in their manager package.
- Players will be encouraged to use hand sanitizer frequently throughout the game.
- Physical distancing must always be maintained, outside the active tag/play on the ball.

Football Equipment

- Players must bring their own water bottle (shared water bottles are not permitted).
- Footballs must be wiped down with hand sanitizer at half time and at the end of the game.
- Players and officials may choose to wear a mask and will be encouraged to do so.

Pre-Game and Sideline Expectations

- Games will consist of two 23 minute halves, plus 5 plays.
- Teams may arrive to warm up 15 minutes prior to their games. You cannot step on the field until the previous game has concluded. Physical distancing must always be practiced.
- Player benches/areas will be assigned on your schedule. Communal team benches are not allowed.
- Physical distancing is required on the sidelines.
- Players cannot be within two meters of one another on the sidelines. Failure to physically distance on the sidelines will result in an unsportsmanlike penalty (10-yards).

Rule Changes

High fives, handshakes, and close contact celebrations are not permitted.

- A warning will be given for the first team offense.
- An unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for a second offense (10-yards).
- The game will be ended if there is a third offense per team.
- Referees have the right to penalize for the first offense if they deem a team has not physically distanced purposely.
- Spitting at the field will be penalized with an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty (10-yards) for the first offense, then ejection for the second offense.

Huddles are a team decision – masks must be worn if you choose to use them

- Play clock will be lengthened to 30 (was 20) seconds to allow teams to “circle” 2 meters apart further down the field so the opponents cannot hear them.
- Offenses will not be allowed to snap the ball within 10 seconds of the play clock starting to ensure that defenses can adequately provide a defensive play call.
- Within the last three minutes of each half, teams may go “hurry up” and snap the ball at any time after the whistle is blown (do not have to wait 10 seconds).
- Physical distancing must be maintained during time out periods.
- We will monitor this guideline and make changes as needed.

Illegal Formation (Offense):

- Offenses may not “stack” receivers at the line. Physical distancing requirements are enforced on the field.
- Stacking receivers will result in an illegal formation penalty (10-yards).

Illegal Formation (Defense):

- Defenses are not allowed to play press man coverage.
- All defensive players must line up a minimum of three-yards off the receiver (this is the same rule that applied previously only to those covering the center).
- The ball will be placed no closer than the two-yard line when in a goal line situation.
- If a defensive back is within three-yards of a receiver at the snap of the ball an offside penalty will be called (5-yards).

General Information Regarding C19 Pandemic

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people and others cause illness in animals. Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold. COVID-19 is a new disease that has not been previously identified in humans. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people, and more rarely, these can then spread from person to person through close contact.

There have been 2 other specific coronaviruses that have spread from animals to humans and which have caused severe illness in humans. These are the:

- Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS CoV)
- Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS CoV)

Those who are infected with COVID-19 may have little to no symptoms. You may not know you have symptoms of COVID-19 because they are similar to a cold or flu.

Symptoms have included:

Most common symptoms:

- Fever
 - Dry cough
 - Tiredness
- Less common symptoms:
- Aches and pains
 - Sore throat
 - Diarrhea
 - Conjunctivitis
 - Headache
 - Loss of taste or smell
 - A rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- chest pain or pressure
- loss of speech or movement

Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to COVID-19. This is the longest known incubation period for this disease. Recent evidence indicates that the virus can be transmitted to others from someone who is infected but not showing symptoms.

This includes people who:

- Have not yet developed symptoms (pre-symptomatic)
 - Never develop symptoms (asymptomatic)
- While experts know that these kinds of transmissions are happening among those in close contact or in close physical settings, it is not known to what extent. This means it is extremely important to follow the proven preventative measures.