

2021

COVID-19 PROTOCOL



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Index	page
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. TARGET GROUPS.....	2
3. GENERAL INFORMATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES – COVID-19	2
4. COVID OFFICERS	4
5. SE COMPETITIONS COVID-19 TESTING POLICY	4
6. PRECAUTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION.....	5
7. PRECAUTIONS FOR ACCOMODATION.....	6
8. PRECAUTIONS AT VENUES	6
9. PREAUTIONS FOR GAMES	7
10. PRECAUTIONS FOR THE MEDIA	8
11. PRECAUTIONS FOR SPECTATORS.....	9
12. PRECAUTIONS FOR MEETINGS.....	9
13. KEY RULES OF INFECTION PREVENTION.....	9
14. REFERENCES.....	10
15. DEFINITION.....	10

1. INTRODUCTION

Softball is a fast and dynamic team sport and in contrast to other sports, close proximity and/or body contact, however minimal, cannot be always avoided. As SE's main objective is to organize our upcoming Competitions with the Local Organizers in a healthy and safe environment for all parties involved, these COVID-19 Guidelines define medical and operational protocols to safeguard players, coaches, team officials, umpires, other game officials and other stakeholders during the Championships and Cups.

The intention of the preventive measures is to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 before, during and after our Competitions. While the COVID-19 situation is constantly evolving and an infection-free environment cannot be guaranteed, SE's goal is to ensure the implementation of precautions for the protection of all stakeholders and target groups involved in the competitions, and to provide robust procedures in the event of any suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19.

These Guidelines have temporary effect, linked to the current situation - they will be updated periodically. SE will monitor the situation regarding the global Coronavirus pandemic in close cooperation with the relevant international, national health and sports authorities.

The Guidelines complement any measures applied by the respective local authorities, which will always prevail.

SE will also require regular feedback from all participating Federations prior to the event regarding their current government protocols.

2. TARGET GROUPS

This document is addressed to the target groups involved in each SE Competition. The framework has to be followed in full, by all, in order to ensure the implementation of the measures and protocols according to their roles and responsibilities. These target groups are:

- a) Players and Team Officials
- b) SE Officials and Game Officials
- c) Event Organizer / Club / NFs and Local Organizing Committee (LOC)
- d) Local service providers.

The implementation of such measures will be in total compliance with WHO recommendations, government and local regulations and laws and will remain dynamic as is expected with an ever evolving situation.

Our aim is also to protect the health of fans, who are presently excluded from competitions, but who might over time be allowed to attend. In each case, specific spectator measures will be instituted as recommended or required by relevant local authorities.

3. GENERAL INFORMATION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES – COVID-19

Symptoms

Based upon the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered Coronavirus. The most common symptoms caused by COVID-19 include:

- Dry cough;
- Tiredness;
- Fever.

Other symptoms include:

- Aches and pains;
- Nasal congestion;
- Runny nose;
- Sore throat;
- Loss of smell / taste;
- Diarrhea;
- General discomfort.

After initial infection, the average incubation period is 5-6 days to onset of symptoms, but may take as long as 14 days. While most people with Covid-19 have mild or moderate flu-like symptoms, others may develop a severe form of the disease requiring hospitalization and even intensive care unit admission. A percentage of people remain asymptomatic while being carriers of Covid and are infectious to others.

Transmission of the virus

Covid-19 is spread via aerosolized droplets (via the nose or mouth) during coughing or sneezing or extensive conversations for more than 15 minutes, especially in enclosed surroundings. These droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the person, others may remain airborne. People can then catch COVID-

19 by touching the objects or surfaces (ex. tables, handrails, etc), and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth, or by breathing in droplets

General Hygiene recommendations and guidelines

In order to implement the principle of “Protect Yourself and Others” against the COVID-19 virus, the following general recommendations shall be meant as minimum standards for the organization of SE Competitions. This will be in full cooperation with the relevant national and local authorities.

In general, physical distancing (of 2m or 6ft) is considered the most effective way to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus.

Safe distance

- a) Use of prevention measures such as physical barriers at points of interaction between LOC and spectators (if any) (e.g. Ticket stand, check points at the entrance, etc.).
- b) Delegations should avoid close interaction with others in closed areas.
- c) Wherever possible, keep the minimum distance of 1.5 m between persons. Contact with any person having symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing, sneezing or fever must be scrupulously avoided.

Other hygiene guidelines for the individual:

- Frequent washing of hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds is essential.
- Dry your hands using paper towels and dispose of them afterwards.
- If soap and water are not available, use hand disinfectant.
- Avoid touching the water tap before and after washing your hands, use paper towels to open and close the tap and then dispose of them.
- Avoid touching eyes/nose/mouth with your hands.
- Practice cough etiquette into your elbow

Disinfection and cleaning procedures

- a) The Organizer to the best of their ability shall ensure the disinfection of all areas in the Competition Venue and training facilities before, during and after each game including:
 - i. Fields;
 - ii. Common areas;
 - iii. Sports Equipment;
 - iv. Working offices and areas as defined in the SE Regulations, press area, commentary positions, etc;
 - v. Toilets;
 - vi. All other spaces and objects regularly.
- b) The Organizer shall provide a sanitary station with alcohol-based hand gel/sanitizer at all entrances/exits;
- c) The Organizer shall establish a accelerated cleaning plan during competition and then in-depth cleaning in off hours.

Recommendations as to in-Country training and friendly Competitions

It is recommended that teams abide by their country's health and safety regulations during training camps and if teams meet to conduct friendly competitions prior to the Championships or Cups to create a temporary bubble for all participants. We also recommend that testing be incorporated in training camps prior to arriving to the Championships or Cups.

4. COVID OFFICERS

In order to ensure the proper implementation of general recommendations and the specific protocols, the following Officers will be appointed by the Organizer and Softball Team delegations as follows:

- **Event COVID-19 Hygiene Officer:** The Organizer shall appoint an Event COVID-19 Hygiene Officer responsible for all hygiene matters.
This person should preferably have a medical background in order to supervise and conduct the established procedures and protocols. They should have an extensive knowledge of any government regulations in force and collaborate with the Team Hygiene officer.
- **Team COVID-19 Hygiene Officer:** Each team delegation must appoint a Team COVID -19 Hygiene Officer responsible for all hygiene matters of the team. This person is chosen from the Officials travelling with the Team Delegation and be on the Roster of 8 Officials allowed in the Team Dugout (7 in Slowpitch).
The Team COVID-19 Hygiene Officers should monitor the health status of all delegation members on a daily basis; be well informed on the current government regulations followed by the organizers; educate and supervise the members of their delegation; and closely collaborate with the COVID-19 Hygiene Officer.

5. SE COMPETITIONS COVID-19 TESTING POLICY

General provisions

Most countries entry requirements demand that every person entering the country provide a negative COVID-19 PCR test carried out within 72 hours before the arrival date. Each Organizer will notify participating countries the regulations that are in place.

The host country might be implementing a Green passport / vaccination policy based on the EU regarding “Green passport” or Vaccination Passports new policies.

All participating countries must respect the countries entrance policy, which may be adjusted from time to time up until actual entry occurs.

The common aim of SE and the Event Organizers remains the health and well-being of all athletes, officials and fans. In planning and organizing a SE Competition, the Organizer shall follow the following requirements in addition to those listed in General recommendations:

- a) SE retains the right to require additional testing on any accredited person throughout the period of the SE Competition, in addition to any certificates already provided upon arrival.
- b) The SE Competition Organizers shall provide or make available Rapid Test kits in order to enable the safety of all participants, at cost to the participating Federation.
- c) The Organizer shall ensure that the Rapid Tests will be performed on all the persons for whom the negative test certificate is a mandatory pre-condition for taking part in the SE Competition (Team delegations, SE Officials and Umpires). The tests shall be performed by a Medical Doctor, COVID-19 Hygiene Officer or a person with medical background, with an event TC immediately informed.
- d) The Organizer shall ensure that tests will be performed as follows:
 - i. upon arrival of the visiting teams and Officials and on the day of the Technical Meeting for the hosting team at the latest.
 - ii. 48 hours after the first test for all the relevant persons (Team delegations Members, SE Officials and Umpires), in short 48 hours after the TC meeting.
- e) Define the access to the venue, ensuring multiple entrances and control points for:
 - i. Team delegations and Officials
 - ii. Local Organizing Committee members
 - iii. Accredited media (if any)

- f) Ensure that the entrance / exit points to the Venue for the above groups of accredited people shall be completely separated by the entrance/exit points for spectators (if any) and make sure that the flows shall not cross each other.
- g) Identify a room for temporary isolation in case of person with suspicious symptoms at all facilities.
- h) Check the body temperature of all team delegation members, SE Officials and Game Officials upon arrival at the official hotels. The process shall be undertaken by the COVID-19 Hygiene Officer.
- i) Check the body temperature of each person entering the competition venue and any other facilities used (e.g. training / fitness facilities), The process shall be undertaken by the COVID-19 Hygiene Officer.
- j) Prepare specific protocols to regulate scrimmage games prior to tournament play.
- k) Receive from each Team Leader a daily list with the people entering the Venue, Training facilities:
 - i. Name and surname
 - ii. Team leader phone numbers for faster reaction if needed
 - iii. Time of arrival and departure

The Organizers shall make sure that the collection, process, storage and retention of personal data (including medical data) are in compliance with national data protection legislation, regulations, and the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation).

- l) Limit the number of people present at the same time in the following competition areas:
 - i. Field of play
 - ii. Medical services and personnel
 - iii. Media & TV Area (press tribune, commentary positions, camera positions, etc.)
- m) Define a clear schedule for all the activities to be carried out such as trainings, in order to avoid any large gatherings and minimize the crossing and sharing of spaces among the different target groups.

Isolation of suspected or confirmed cases

Any member of a target group involved in the competition who develops any respiratory or flu-like symptoms must:

- Leave the venue immediately (if applicable) to return to their hotel isolation room.
- Be isolated in the COVID-19 isolation room at the venue or hotel.
- Be tested and inform the COVID-19 Hygiene Officer.
- The information shall be reported to the Organizer, TC and EC.
- The Organizer will report to the respective health authorities.

Anyone involved in the competition in direct contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case should be tested accordingly and be isolated until the test result is issued.

If confirmed, they must not return to the competition.

Bubble

The concept of creating Bubbles shall be applied with the aim of minimizing the transmission of COVID-19 infections before, during and after the competitions.

Each Target Group should create their own bubble and refrain as much as possible from any external contacts.

6. PRECAUTIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION

Per SE Regulations each Team is responsible for their own transportation to and from the Airport and hotel to venue.

For the local transportation of SE officials and umpires the Organizer is responsible for their transportation to and from the airport and hotel to the venue.

The following requirements shall be followed:

- a) Before entering the vehicle, body temperature screening must take place. Persons who develop fever or symptoms indicative of COVID-19 must not enter the vehicle.
- b) All vehicles should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before and after every trip during the Competition.
- c) Teams must provide masks and alcohol-based hand gel in their vehicles.
- d) All passengers should wear a mask.
- e) In case of shuttle services, ensure minimum security distance with at least one empty seat per row and no passenger immediately next to the driver.
- f) A maximum of three persons (including the driver) are allowed in case of transfer by car, with no passenger next to the driver.
- g) Cleaning and disinfection procedures shall be ensured after each ride.

7. PRECAUTIONS FOR ACCOMODATION

The Organizer needs to coordinate with hotel requirements for COVID-19 prevention measures for example:

- *Avoid social gathering in common areas, keep safe distances in all meeting areas.*
- *Separate dining areas per team and safe distances between individuals respected*
- *Meals should be served following local health authorities' guidelines.*

8. PRECAUTIONS AT VENUES

General provisions

- Any individual having any symptoms indicative of COVID-19 is not allowed to enter the venue.
- Players, team officials, umpires, TC and other game officials (scorekeepers etc.) and other target groups involved directly in the game or preparation of the game, who develop symptoms must leave the venue immediately, be isolated in the isolation room and be tested.
- Anyone who was in direct contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case must be tested accordingly and be isolated until the test result is issued.
- All shops and food booths at the venue must follow the physical distancing measures and for all queues at the venue entrance, physical distancing must be ensured.
- No meals will be served in the VIP area of the arena.

Entrance and exit regulations

- Arrival schedule of target groups must be prepared in order to avoid crowding at the entrance and exit of venue.
- A temperature screening procedure should be implemented at the entrance of the venue. Entrance staff and temperature screening staff must wear masks and gloves, and use hand disinfectants at the entrance and exit areas.

Areas at the venues

- The venues should provide for the teams to be separate in different areas of the venue. This also applies to the different target groups.
- The maximum number of persons in any area will be based on local and national guidelines.

Changing rooms

- The Organizer should ensure that the changing rooms and toilets are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after each training session and after each game. The door knobs, chairs, tables and floors must be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
- Time spent in changing rooms must be restricted to the minimum necessary.
- Players are recommended to change into uniform at the hotel before going to the venue.

Equipment

- Avoid sharing personal devices such phones, computers, tablets, etc.;
- Avoid personal clothing / equipment being left in common places. Store inside personal bag always;
- Avoid sharing of competition equipment. Each athlete should have their own bat, helmet, glove, batting gloves, rosin bag, etc.;
- Disposable cups or personalized water bottles should be used, and never shared.

9. PREAUTIONS FOR GAMES

Our traditional ways of competing will be modified to minimize the risk of infection.

General precautions

- All target groups, fully aware of COVID-19 measures, must always follow the hygiene guidelines.
- All areas in the venue must be thoroughly cleaned. Hand disinfectants must be available in all areas.
- ***As at every SE competition, the Technical Commission will be responsible for reacting to any need to reschedule games or re-structuring of the event.***

Precautions before and during the game

- Each team in a game will be on opposite sides during warm-ups, BP, and Infield practice;
- If possible, avoid pre-game ceremonies (i.e. anthems, first pitch ceremonies, etc.);
- No handshakes, no friendly gift exchange, no autograph signatures;
- Minimum physical distance of 1-metre at Home Plate meeting;
- If possible, avoid line-up exchange at home plate.
- No chewing tobacco, seeds or spitting at any time.;
- Athletes shall not lick their fingers;
- Minimum physical distance of 1 meter shall always be kept within dugouts. If there is not sufficient room, an alternate space may be assigned for non-essential personnel and / or inactive players;
- Balls: Ball prep (mud rubbing) to be done by one appointed team member with protective rubber gloves;
- Use of different set of official balls for home and visitor teams on defense.
- Team meetings, including pitching visits, should maintain physical distance of minimum 1 meter;
- Coaches may approach umpires, but keep a minimum distance of two meters;
- Base coaches must always stay within their box;
- Pitchers, catchers and bullpen coaches must always maintain a physical distance of 1 meter.
- Avoid any kind of handshakes / fist bumps between them or while interacting with team representatives;
- Umpires shall wear masks and gloves;
- Technical Commissioners should always work from a restricted area and maintain physical distances;
- Scorekeepers should thoroughly clean tablets or laptops before and after use.

- Scorekeepers should always work from a restricted area and keep security distance;
- Prioritize electronic scoring programs; paper scoring remains necessary.

Precautions after the game

- Players and team officials must leave the field of play immediately after the game.
- Teams must wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand disinfectant before leaving the venue.
- Players are recommended to take a shower in their hotel room after returning from the game.
- In case of award ceremonies, every team should be honored separately and at a distance.
- Shaking hands during medal ceremonies is prohibited
- Winners shall receive their medals to be put on by themselves.
- All individuals involved in award ceremonies, except players, are obliged to wear face masks while physical distance should be maintained.

10. PRECAUTIONS FOR THE MEDIA

General principles

All media personnel must comply with the applicable local and national law as well as the requirements of these SE COVID Guidelines. This includes PCR tests within every 72 hours, a mandatory wearing of masks, keeping a safe distance and regular washing of hands.

Broadcasters must meet all local and national requirements during their work, such as the use of Plexiglas dividers between operator positions. Commentators are temporarily exempt from the requirement to wear a mask whilst at work but must resume use at all other times.

Media and Photographers

- Limit number of the media and photographers
- Define the areas where they can move and operate
- Photographers and Media shall wear a mask

Media room

A physical distance of 1.5m must be respected in all media rooms at all times, and must be ventilated regularly.

Interviews

Positions for interviews must be allocated beforehand, with a distance of at least 1.5m between each position.

The maximum number of people per interview, including the guest, is four.

Press conferences

All press conferences shall be held virtually. Only the coach plus one player of each team, in addition to one moderator, are allowed to attend.

11. PRECAUTIONS FOR SPECTATORS

Currently spectators are prohibited.

Guidelines will be issued if and when spectators are admitted.

12. PRECAUTIONS FOR MEETINGS

Technical Meetings

Technical (TC) Meetings shall be organized as follows:

- A maximum of two officials per Team may attend, including the Bat test controller;
- The TC Meeting room must be big enough to allow for physical distancing;
- A distance of 1.5m should be kept between the tables;
- Special routes must be provided for entering & leaving the room.
- All usually required documents handed in at the Technical Meeting will be done with the use of latex gloves.

Other Meetings

- In any scheduled meeting safe distances shall be respected and the maximum number of persons will be defined according to the size and ventilation system of the room.
- Allow flexibility in terms of location (e.g. if weather conditions allow, conduct the meetings in open spaces such as a hotel terrace).
- Define a clear time limit for any meeting.

13. KEY RULES OF INFECTION PREVENTION

The following 10 key rules should be respected in order to reduce the risk of infection:

- a) Frequent washing of hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is essential.
- b) Natural ventilation is the best.
- c) Do not touch other people's items: only touch railings and other surfaces if necessary.
- d) Use your personal items.
- e) Keep physical distancing.
- f) No handshakes, no hugging, no kissing.
- g) Wait outside and maintain a physical distance rather than wait inside and queue.
- h) Avoid mass gatherings and crowds.
- i) Eat healthy food, sleep enough and exercise to enjoy good health.
- j) Follow the COVID-19 preventive measures to protect your health and others.

14. REFERENCES

- European Handball Federation COVID Guidelines.
- 'Return to Play Protocol' developed by the Union of European Football Associations.
- WHO guidelines for prevention and management of COVID-19.
- WBSC Baseball and Softball COVID-19 'Return to Play' guidelines.

15. DEFINITION

SE Competition: means one of the competitions organized by SE, composed of Fastpitch and Slowpitch Softball games and any side event or meeting approved by SE.

Event COVID-19 Hygiene Officer: means an individual appointed by the Organizer as the person with overall responsibility for all hygiene matters.

Team COVID-19 Hygiene Officer: means an individual appointed by a National Federation or a Club responsible for all hygiene matters of their Team.

Bubble: Group of people being accommodated at the same hotel without any external contact throughout their stay.

