



COVID-19 UPDATE

August 2020

NFHS SPORTS MEDICINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SMAC)

The NFHS SMAC would like to provide you with the following updates as each state association continues to face new challenges on a daily basis. Recognizing that uncertainty has been the only constant over the past five months, the information provided below is subject to change.

COVID-19 TESTING

Frequent testing of asymptomatic athletes is a major component of all professional and many collegiate return-to-play plans. The NFHS SMAC does not recommend testing of asymptomatic high school athletes. A comprehensive testing program at the high school level is cost prohibitive and raises concerns regarding proper allocation of resources during the pandemic.

TOOTH AND MOUTH PROTECTORS (Mouthguards)

The best evidence to date shows us that the coronavirus is spread through respiratory droplets. Saliva from mouthguards is unlikely to be a significant source of infection transmission. However, we recognize that parents and others may find the prospect of athletes frequently placing and removing a mouthguard concerning. Given this reality, the NFHS SMAC suggests that state associations develop statements instructing athletes to refrain from the removal of mouthguards while on the playing field, court, rink or mat. If mouthguards are removed on the sidelines or bench area, the athlete should use hand sanitizer each time after touching the mouthguard. A properly fitted mouthguard is required by rule in the following NFHS Sports: Football, Field Hockey, Boys and Girls Lacrosse, Ice Hockey and Wrestling (for wrestlers wearing braces).

FACIAL COVERINGS AND HELMETS WITH FACE MASKS

The NFHS continues to field questions regarding facial coverings on or under the face mask in some sports but mainly football right now.

Cloth face coverings (that tie to the head or loop around the ears under the helmet) are permissible to be worn under the face mask (See May 2020 NFHS SMAC Guidance Document for more information on face coverings). Facial coverings – no restriction on color. The NFHS SMAC does not want anything – facial covering or shield on the outside of any face mask for any sport. They want it on the inside of the face mask for risk minimization issues as they want the face mask in front of it.

Plastic shields covering the entire face (unless integrated into the face mask and attached to the helmet and clear without the presence of any tint) shall not be allowed during the contest.

The NFHS SMAC is always concerned that any product or device that attaches to the helmet and/or face mask will void the National Operating Committee on Standards for Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) certification and will automatically void the manufacturers warranty and/or lead to the potential of an unintended injury. NOCSAE stated the following with regards to facial coverings attached to the face mask: ***“A face covering attached to a faceguard would not automatically void the NOCSAE certification of compliance with our NOCSAE standard, assuming it does not attach permanently to the faceguard and has no rigid components that might protrude into the facial area.” “The helmet/faceguard manufacturer has ultimate final say as to what can and cannot be attached to their face mask.”***

Please be aware of this information from the NOCSAE as it does apply to products that were not made by the manufacturer of the helmet and/or face mask:

<https://www.nfhs.org/media/1019308/nocsae-statement-add-on-helmet-products-may-2018.pdf>

Football:

A neck gaiter or Buff should **NOT** be allowed as it could result in a neck/tracheal/laryngeal injury if grabbed from behind and used to drag a ball carrier down.

The following two shields for football will be permissible for competition and is compliant with current 2020 NFHS Football Rule 1-5-3c(4) as long as it is clear and has no tint. The NFHS SMAC is not endorsing or mandating either of these products:

1. Schutt Sports – Flexible 2-piece “Splash Shield” (Clear).
2. Actuated Medical, Inc. – Polycarbonate 2-piece face shield (Clear).

Oakley has manufactured a face shield for the NFL that attaches to the football face mask. At this time, that face shield is not available for purchase by the public.

Other NFHS Sports:

NFHS Rules Editors will inform the membership of anything they approve for their respective sports.

HYDRATION AND HYGIENE DURING COMPETITION

Two concerns regarding distribution of water during football games and some other sports have recently arisen:

1. Will there be enough time given during a timeout for each athlete to receive their personal water bottle?
State associations should discuss this issue with their respective officials’ association to make sure that this situation is properly addressed during all contests.
2. What if schools do not have the resources to purchase an individual water bottle for each athlete?
Schools should consider the use of disposable wax-lined paper cups delivered on trays or in carriers. Local fast food restaurants may donate.