

*From Dr. Jim Moeller, Sports Medicine Physician and long-time Troy parent
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Return to Sport: Covid-19 Considerations

General Comments: Since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all been anxious and excited to “get back to normal,” yet we don’t understand what that actually means. One aspect of life we’re looking forward to is return to sport activities. As we move cautiously forward, we must remain vigilant regarding Covid-19, so we don’t contribute to an increase in cases.

Regarding sport participation and Covid-19, it has been recognized that infection with the virus has been linked to the development of **myocarditis**. Myocarditis is an inflammation of the heart musculature that can lead to heart failure and **sudden cardiac death (SCD)**. Injury to the heart muscle comes from a combination of direct damage from the virus itself, as well as the effect of inflammation on muscle cells. Heart function may decline, electrical issues may develop (arrhythmias) and SCD may occur. The risk of SCD in a patient with myocarditis is increased during vigorous activities and sport participation.

Our first priority for your child is to keep them safe when they participate in sport activities. In order to achieve this vital goal, we need your help, and the help of your primary physicians as we transition back to sports. This year, the MHSAA does not require a sports physical for student athletes returning to the same school who have a physical on file from the 2019-20 school year. We do have specific recommendations before your child reports for practice, and will strongly recommend specific information to be provided in the case of student-athletes who were sick with Covid-19, or possibly had Covid-19 infection but were never tested.

Medical Recommendations

Medical Recommendation #1. Your Child Was Proven to Have Had a Covid-19 Infection, But NEVER Had Any Symptoms

If your child was proven to have had a Covid-19 infection, proven by anti-body testing, AND they never had any symptoms, we recommend they receive a physical exam with their PCP even though the MHSAA does not require one for all student-athletes this year. We also highly recommend you request from your PCP that an **electrocardiogram (ECG)**, which is an electrical tracing of heart activity, be obtained to look for unusual electrical activity that may suggest heart injury from the virus. This recommendation is consistent with recent published sports medicine recommendations (the reference is included at the end of this document).

Medical Recommendation #2. PCR Testing

PCR testing is the nose swab testing used to determine if a person is currently infected with Covid-19. Although we cannot require you obtain this test prior to onset of sport participation, we do recommend it. Young people infected with the virus may not exhibit any symptoms, that

does not mean they can't spread it to others. Any person with current disease should quarantine for 14 days initially, with appropriate medical decisions being made after that time. Just as we don't want someone else's child infecting your student-athlete, we don't want your student-athlete infecting another child.

Medical Recommendation #3. Symptom Checks

Please monitor your child for possible signs and symptoms of Covid-19 infection. Fever (temperature $\geq 100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$), unexplained sweats, cough, shortness of breath, loss of sense of smell or taste are all possible signs of infection. If any of these develop, **DO NOT BRING YOUR CHILD TO PRACTICE**. Call your PCP and follow their instruction regarding possible testing for the presence Covid-19 illness. Also, please let us know this is happening so we can follow-up with you as well.

Medical Recommendation #4. Wear a Mask

Please wear masks in public, this include when you are in close contact with your friends. We all want to be able to stop wearing masks, but you can protect yourself and others with this simple intervention. We are still trying to figure out how to best protect your child through some type of mask or barrier device during vigorous workouts and competition, but this may be difficult to accomplish.

Medical Recommendation #5. Wash Your Hands

20 seconds, with soap, regularly. Carry hand sanitizer to use when washing with soap and water is not convenient or possible.

Medical Recommendation #6. Don't Share Water Bottles or Food with Teammates

Sharing water bottles and food is a great way to spread the virus. Don't do it! We are working on solutions to adequately provide fluids to athletes during practices and competitions that will reduce the risk of transmission in this area. We will not be providing easy access to community sources of water, so it highly recommended that each student-athlete bring their own replacement fluids to every practice and competition. Although this has not been studied, it is probably safest if your student-athlete brings multiple, sealed, bottles or water and/or sport drink instead of a refillable water bottle, so refilling would not be required.

Medical Requirements

Medical Requirement #1: Your Student-Athlete Had a Symptomatic Case of Covid-19 Infection

If your child was ill due to Covid-19 infection, they are at increased risk for myocarditis. We'll need to divide this scenario into two sections. These recommendations are consistent with recent published sports medicine recommendations (the reference is included at the end of this document).

1a. Your child had a mild illness due to Covid-19 infection OR suspected Covid-19 infection, even if no specific testing was ever performed. This would be a situation in

which they were treated at home with supportive care and have since recovered and feel well. In this case, your child will require clearance for sport participation from their PCP. **This clearance *MUST* include documentation of a recent medical history, physical exam, AND ECG.**

1b. Your child had a moderate or severe illness (i.e. required Rx medications from a physician or hospitalization was required) due to Covid-19 infection OR suspected Covid-19 infection, even if no specific testing was ever performed. In this case, your child will require clearance for sport participation from their PCP. **This clearance *MUST* include documentation of a recent medical history, physical exam, ECG, echocardiogram, and exercise stress test.** We also highly recommend your PCP obtain appropriate blood tests to look for continuing cardiac muscle injury.

Medical Requirement #2. Your Child Will Be Required to Be Screened Daily For Symptoms and Fever Prior to Being Allowed to Participate.

Every student-athlete will be required to go through symptom and fever screening, performed by the Athletic Trainer, or a delegate of the AT, before they are allowed to participate for that day. If they report symptoms, or have a fever, **they will not be allowed to participate, and will be sent home. In these cases, they will require medical clearance from their PCP prior to return to participation. This should include a PCR (nasal swab) test,** but that is up to the discretion of the PCP. **Student-athletes who are sent home on 2 occasions for the above reason(s) will be required to have a normal PCR test prior to return.** If you are already aware of symptoms and/or fever in your child (see medical recommendation #3 above), please DO NOT bring them to/allow them to attend practice. In this case, please follow the instructions listed in *Medical Recommendation #3: Symptom Checks*.

Medical Requirement #3: Mask Use

We are still trying to figure out the best method to protect your child with mask use or other barrier devices during practice and/or competition. Some of these decisions will be predicated on the recommendations of other organizations (MHSAA, NCAA, USOPC, AMSSM, etc.). That being said, all student-athletes will be required to wear masks during team meetings (because social distancing will not be possible) and at any time they are indoors, including in the locker rooms, training room, weight room, meeting/classrooms. This will also include mask use on buses for travel to and from competitions.

Medical Requirement #4: Hydration

Sharing of water bottles, and community access to water is not recommended and we will take precautions in this area as well. Water fountains will not be available for a quick drink or for filling personal water bottles. Water is available in sinks for washing hands, but absolutely should not be used to fill personal water bottles. If a personal water bottle needs filling, we require that only the AT, or delegate of the AT, refill the bottles. We will require that personal water bottles be stored individually, ideally in your student-athlete's person gear bag. Although this has not been studied, it is probably safest if your student-athlete brings multiple, sealed, bottles of water or sport drink, so refilling would not be required at all.

Medical Requirement #5: Training Room

In order to maximize social distancing, there will be restrictions on the number of people allowed in the training room at any specific time. ONLY student-athletes receiving care from the Athletic Training staff will be allowed in the training room. People waiting to enter the training room will be required to adhere to social distancing guidelines. All athletes in the training room and waiting to enter the training room will be required to wear masks, and will be required to wash their hands (or use hand sanitizer) upon entering and exiting the training room. If a parent(s) wish(es) to be present in the training room during and evaluation or treatment, they will also be required to wear masks and wash their hands on entry/exit, and parents will be counted in the total for the capacity restriction.

Baggish A, Drezner JA, Kim J, Martinez M, Prutkin JM. Resurgence of sport in the wake of COVID-19: cardiac considerations in competitive athletes. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2020. July. Only online version available current time.