



Newton Youth Hockey 2020-2021 Return to Play FAQ

This FAQ provides answers to many recently asked questions about returning to the ice and returning to play for Newton Youth Hockey.

General & Administrative:

1. What are the guiding principles and expectations for the 2020-2021 NYH season and return to play?

There are a few key principles that are guiding NYH decisions as we plan and restart hockey this season. First and foremost given the COVID-19 pandemic, our decisions are grounded in creating a safe environment and adhering to State and Local health guidelines as well as those from Mass Hockey. As with every season, we also strive to have a positive, welcoming, and encouraging atmosphere for all participants and families; provide a pathway for the development of skills, teamwork, and positive values; and provide players an opportunity to play in a competitive environment.

We also expect the following of players / parents:

- **Follow the rules put in place**
 - *While some may feel cumbersome to follow, they are in place for everyone's health and safety. We need to be collectively vigilant and proactively follow these rules to minimize and prevent COVID spread so this season can operate without interruption and disruption for our players and families.*
- **Never feel obligated to attend for whatever reason**
 - *There are many circumstances and situations unique to each player and their family given these unprecedented times – please do what is needed for your player and family and expect no judgement.*
- **Bring positivity to your hockey games / practices**
 - *Leave negativity, put downs, and drama at home – this game is about having fun, having an opportunity to socialize a little more and encouraging your player / teammates to be great human beings given the current unique times.*
- **Be flexible and be patient**
 - *This will certainly be a unique hockey season given modified game play rules, COVID / health protocols and associated changes to rink access, player dressing, practices, coaching feedback, etc. The pandemic situation continues to evolve and may bring other changes and adjustments to what we have now so please continue to be flexible and patient throughout this season.*

Last Updated 9/14/2020

2. What happens if the season is cancelled abruptly due to COVID outbreak or if the League or State cancels the season? Will a refund be provided?

There are many unknowns in the coming months, but NYH will continue to closely monitor and comply with all local and state health and VHL/MA Hockey directives to help inform our course of action. Where there is no clear guidance, the NYH Board will make a decision based on our guiding principles stated for this hockey season.

With the season now underway and many costs incurred, we will not be able to offer full refunds in the event of a season cancelation. However, if the season is significantly altered or shortened, we will aim to offer a partial refund or credit for future registrations.

3. Will my team placement or my team's roster change?

Most rosters have largely been set for the season, but there remains a chance that rosters may need to be adjusted if we see a meaningful number of late registrations or withdrawals in the system. We have tried to offer a generous amount of flexibility to NYH families this year, which unfortunately makes the process of balancing roster sizes more difficult, as we have been unable to entirely determine our final registration numbers for the season.

Game Play and Practice:

4. Will there be practices and games this year?

Yes! There will be practices and games this year. Game rules have been modified and dictated by the State and MA Hockey to keep players, coaches and referees safe and will be abided by. (See changes below).

5. How many players will be allowed on the ice during practice & games?

No more than 25 players are allowed at each end of the ice, and 14 feet of distance must be maintained between the two groups. Groups should not mix during practice (no combined warmups or line skates).

6. What game rules have changed this year?

Body checking will not be allowed at any age level, impacting both Bantam and Midget play. A body check during game play will be penalized with a minor penalty. Officials may also blow the whistle more quickly than traditional games to limit the scrums and close intermittent contact. There will be no handshakes at the end of a game, but teams have the option to line up on the blue line and "stick salute" if they desire, but it is not required.

7. When do face coverings need to be worn?

Coaches, volunteers, and officials are required to have masks at all times. Players may remove their masks during practice while on the ice, although we strongly encourage them to keep them on at all times. During game play, all forwards are required to wear face coverings during faceoffs and all players must have masks on while on the bench. As with practices, we encourage players to keep face coverings on at all times if they are able to. This will limit the

need for constant adjustments on the bench and on the ice in advance of faceoffs, while also maximizing player health and safety.

8. What type of face coverings are acceptable or not acceptable?

Face coverings can be gaiter type or ones that loop around the ears / tie behind the head. Please keep in mind that your player will need to be able to put on their helmet while still wearing a face mask so please try to see what fits/works best before getting on the ice.

Note that plastic face shields are not an acceptable substitute for a face covering. While they may offer an additional layer of protection, your player will still need to wear a cloth face covering.

Mouth guards are required for all players at the Peewee level and above, and are strongly encouraged for all ages. As such, please keep in mind that mouth guard straps that attach to the helmet cage will not be able to be used while also having a face covering on. Please plan accordingly by having your player 'test' their gear situation before getting on the ice for the first time.

9. What responsibilities will coaches and/or referees have on ice to maintain modified game rules / social distancing rules?

Referees will be responsible for adhering to and maintaining the modified game and social distancing rules. Coaches will have a responsibility to maintain face covering and social distancing rules on the bench. If you see or hear of violations to game rules, face masks and/or social distancing rules, please notify your coach and/or email president@newtonyouthhockey.com.

10. Will the team or NYH provide water / water bottles during games? During practices?

NYH and team coaches will not bring water and water bottles. All players must bring their own water bottle to games and practices and will not be permitted to share. Water fill stations at rinks may be operational, but we highly encourage you to fill your player's water bottle at home prior to coming to the rink. (This may be especially important as some rinks will not allow parents inside.)

11. Specific for Mites and Squirts: How will the goalie and gear rotation system work?

In keeping with our development objectives, we will continue to encourage all Mite and Squirt players to participate in the goalie rotation. Unique to this season, players may be expected to play goalie for two consecutive weeks (or longer if they wish) to minimize equipment handoffs among players. NYH will have two sets of goalie gear for each team. This will enable goalie gear to stay with a player for their goalie duration and then get appropriately cleaned and sanitized following protocols for an extended period of time before the handoff to the next player in rotation.

12. Will parents / non-players be able to watch our player during games? During practices?

No spectators are allowed at Fessenden. VHL spectator policies will vary by rink, but most are currently allowing the state limit of one spectator per player. The ability to continue allowing access to rinks will be contingent on compliance with the mandatory guidelines: face coverings at all times, social distancing at all times, no parents in any locker room, following the one way enter/exit patterns, 1 spectator per player, etc. Rink-specific protocols for all VHL rinks can be found on the VHL website or in the COVID Info tab on the NYH website.

Several rinks offer broadcast of the games via Live Barn (<https://livebarn.com/en/register>). There is a fee for the use of this App. Fessenden does not use Live Barn.

Fessenden (our home rink) has asked that each team designate one non-coach adults to support each group that is on the ice to help with any player that needs to leave the ice for any reason. Volunteering for one of these roles for your team is a way to be able to be in the rink to watch games and practices.

13. What other rink protocols are in place? Is there access to change rooms? How will player drop off / pick-ups occur?

All VHL rinks, as well as Fessenden have restricted rink access protocols in place to support social distancing guidelines. Each rink will have its own set of policies and procedures they will follow in line with MA health and MA hockey guidelines.

Some rinks will only allow coaches and players into the rink. As such, please plan to dress your player prior to coming to the rink (eg. at home or in the car). We encourage putting skates on in the car just before entering the rink, and we strongly encourage players to get skate guards that enable walking on non-ice surfaces to protect skate blades from dulling or getting damaged. There are a variety of both hard/plastic and soft/reinforced slip-on/clip-on style skate guards.

The availability of change rooms is at the discretion of rinks and their individual safety protocols. Rinks that have chosen to open their change rooms must operate them at 50% capacity and also keep the door open at all times for air flow. There should be no expectation of privacy when the change room is in use so please plan accordingly. Also, most rinks will only allow coaches/players into the rink about 10 min before their scheduled ice time to maintain social distancing, capacity and cleaning protocols. As such, players should arrive mostly dressed so that they can get on the ice as quickly as possible once entering the building.

Most rinks will also have a one-way traffic flow in and out of the building. (eg. Entrance in will use one designated door and exit will use a different designated door.) Please keep this in mind when dropping off and picking up your players. We also encourage you as parents to be mindful and on the lookout for NYH players during pickup and to help ensure that all players are safely reunited with their designated adult after practices and games.

Finally, all rinks will have a sign-in process to log everyone who is in the rink to support contact tracing protocols. At many rinks, NYH coaches and team managers will be able to use roster sheets to mark attendance, which will speed entry and ensure proper contact information is recorded for the rink's files.

COVID Protocols:

14. Will NYH supply players with gaiters/masks?

All players must bring their own masks and are strongly encouraged to bring 1-2 backups in case of a need to replace them. If a player does not have a mask, they will not be allowed into the rink and will be unable to skate – no exceptions. NYH has a supply of neck gaiter style face masks if you are interested in ordering one. They can be purchased on the website on the Store tab and will be delivered by your team manager.

15. Will NYH require players to be tested before starting the season? Playing games? Practices?

NYH does not require players to be tested for COVID before starting the season. If your player has been confirmed with COVID, then a negative test result must be shared with NYH before the player can return to any in-person NYH activities.

16. What if my player shows cold or flu like symptoms, or any COVID related symptoms?

If your player presents any cold or flu like symptoms, or any COVID related symptoms, please keep your child at home and do not try to have them play through their illness. Out of an abundance of caution, this is for the health and safety of coaches, teammates, other players, and referees. Also, please notify your team coach(s) should this happen for awareness and transparency. Depending on the circumstances of the player and the team, NYH may recommend that a team abstain from practices and games for a period of time to minimize the potential spread of disease. Where possible, we hope that you will be as transparent as possible with your coaches and NYH, and we will do our best to keep everyone informed as the season unfolds.

17. What if my player tests positive for COVID?

Please immediately keep your player at home and/or follow the directions of your health care provider and the local board of health. Please also notify NYH by sending an email to president@newtonyouthhockey.com. Due to health privacy rules, NYH cannot specifically name individual players who have COVID, but NYH will notify the team coaches and players that a player on the team has tested positive for COVID. This will also be reported to rink managers, the league, and the relevant local boards of health to initiate any contact tracing required. As above, depending on the circumstances of the situation, NYH may recommend that the player's team abstain from on-ice activities for a period of time out of an abundance of caution.

Other resources:

You can find additional information / resources at the links below.

NYH COVID and Return to Play Info / NYH Community Meeting Slides:

<http://www.newtonyouthhockey.com/Page.asp?n=119312&org=NEWTONYOUTHHOCKEY%2E%20COM>

USA Hockey - Hockey is Back Safety Protocols

https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/30f9-2233903/Hockey_is_Back_-_Safety_Protocols_FINAL.pdf

USA Hockey – Player Safety Resources

<https://www.usahockey.com/playersafety>

Mass Hockey Return to Rinks slides

https://cdn3.sportngin.com/attachments/document/80bb-2233925/Mass_Hockey_Gameplay_RRM.pdf

Mass Hockey COVID Resources

<https://www.mahockey.org/hockeyresources>