



Leading Sports Medicine and Sports Organizations Collaborate on COVID-19 Return to Physical Activity Guidelines

A cooperative document to help guide return to sport for high school and collegiate athletics

**For Immediate Release
June 2, 2020**

CONNECTICUT – COVID-19 has sidelined many athletes from their typical training for several months. The combination of lifestyle modifications and potential comorbidities associated with COVID-19 presents important, athlete specific, health and safety risks as return to sport plans emerge. While it is clear that transition periods (the transition between inactive and active training) have a higher risk for catastrophic sport injury, some of the factors that place athletes at higher risk during these periods may be amplified as a result of social distancing measures. Concurrently, many states across the country are hoping to return to high school and collegiate athletics this summer, it is important for organizations to consider how to safely return to activity and avoid injury, illness, and sudden death in sport. When athletics resume, many organizations will be faced with a challenge of encouraging participation, while reducing the risk for injury and sudden death. Musculoskeletal injuries, cardiac arrest and exertional heat illnesses are some of the injuries athletic directors, athletic trainers, strength and conditioning staff, and other school officials will need to develop enhanced safety policies for when athletics resume.

KEY POINTS:

In response to the concerns, several of the leading sports medicine and sports organizations have come together to develop guidelines based on published research based evidence and expert consensus. The organizations involved in this document include: American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches Association (CSCCa), Gatorade Sports Science Institute (GSSI), Korey Stringer Institute (KSI), National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA), National Center for Catastrophic Sport Injury Research (NCCSIR), National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). Topics discussed in this document include preparticipation evaluations, return to physical activity/conditioning, heat acclimatization, injury prevention, and education of key stakeholders. The document outlines recommendations and considerations for both the high school and collegiate athletics setting.

Dr. Rebecca Stearns, corresponding author and Chief Operating Officer of the Korey Stringer Institute (KSI) said *"We are excited to have these leading sports medicine organizations and experts come together to develop this statement. The purpose was to create an overarching consensus statement across high school and collegiate athletics to address return to physical activity considerations during or immediately following physical distancing. It is meant to provide a streamlined approach that sport organizations and those involved in high school and college sport programs (i.e. athletes, coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, athletic trainers, athletic directors, and physicians) may use. We believe that by providing a singular document from these*

sports medicine organizations and communicating these recommendations as ‘one voice’ we can maximize the dissemination of these health and safety recommendations.”

Dr. Michael Koester, Chair of the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee added *"This document provides expert guidance in safely getting millions of high school and collegiate athletes back to sports. The ability to create and publicize these guidelines in an expedited manner really highlights the shared commitment to health and safety of the individuals and organizations involved."*

Dr. Jonathan Drezner, director of the UW Medicine Center for Sports Cardiology and Team Physician for the Seattle Seahawks and University of Washington explained *"COVID-19 causes heart damage in approximately 1 in 5 hospitalized patients. While young persons afflicted with the virus usually have a mild illness or no symptoms, there are concerns that the coronavirus could cause heart infections (myocarditis) in young athletes placing them at risk during exercise. Athletes with past COVID-19 infection or any new or ongoing cardiovascular symptoms such as chest pain, racing heart (palpitations), or excessive fatigue should be evaluated by a physician with additional cardiac testing prior to sports participation."*

Dr. Chuck Stiggins, Executive Director of the Collegiate Strength and Conditioning Coaches association (CSCCa) and Eric McMahon from the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) stated: *"The health and safety of athletes is paramount as it relates to the appropriate progression back into athletic activities. This document reaffirms the importance of strength and conditioning coaches, sport coaches, and medical professionals working together in high school and collegiate athletics. The framework presented supports consistent communication between all members of the athletic department, which is essential for establishing safe and effective responses to COVID-19 at the state and local levels."*

Media Contacts

Rebecca Stearns, Korey Stringer Institute, UConn
rebecca.stearns@uconn.edu (preferred)
(860) 486-0275 (office)