Policy and Procedures: Managing Athletes in the NFL During COVID-19

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DISCLOSURES

No relevant financial relationships to disclose
OBJECTIVES

• Understand COVID 19 screening and testing in the NFL

• Describe the mitigation strategies implemented by the NFL and the CDC to decrease the spread of COVID 19

• Review high risk behaviors that were identified during the NFL season that could lead to COVID 19 spread
A season like no other before...

HOW THE NFL NAVIGATED THROUGH A PANDEMIC
AND MADE IT TO THE FINISH LINE OF A HISTORIC SEASON

SUPER BOWL LIV
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# TESTING STRATEGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LAB USED</th>
<th>BioReference® Laboratories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TESTS USED</td>
<td>Roche Cobas®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hologic Panther®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thermo Fisher QuantStudio®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESULTS</td>
<td>Provided &lt;24-hour turnaround nucleic acid amplification testing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e2.htm?s_cid=mm7004e2_w#F1_down
# TESTING STRATEGY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEST</th>
<th>Anterior nasal swabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>Staff with access to players &gt; 10 min at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anyone with regular close proximity to players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/3 of staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW OFTEN?</td>
<td>6 days/week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TESTING FACTS

August 1, 2020 – February 6, 2020

- **# of TESTS ADMINISTERED**
- **959,860** tests during the season

- **CONFIRMED POSITIVE CASES: 726**
  - **262** players
  - **464** other personnel

QUESTIONNAIRES & TEMPERATURES

- Players and staff members completed a symptom and exposure questionnaire
- Temperature screening at entry of facility

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e2.htm?s_cid=mm7004e2_w#F1_down
PROXIMITY TRACKING DEVICES

Kinexon Devices

Devices captured consecutive and cumulative minutes/seconds of interactions among persons within 1.8 meters (6 feet) of one another.

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Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm lengths) from other people.

Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.

When in public, wear a mask over your nose and mouth.

Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

cdc.gov/coronavirus

TRAVEL CHANGED
TREATMENT: BY APPOINTMENT ONLY
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD PROTOCOL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most meetings held virtually; if not, held be outdoors with physical distancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max weight room capacity of 15 players; no limit on staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups of more than 3 prohibited from gathering outside of facility or team travel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal room access limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locker rooms reconfigured to allow for distancing and/or plexiglass dividers; time and number of players in locker rooms limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members wear masks during practice; players wear masks on practice field when feasible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players encouraged but not required to wear masks in weight room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players encouraged to wear surgical masks during medical treatment / rehab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative RT-PCR test result from the previous day required to enter facility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

https://www.nfl.com/playerhealthandsafety/health-and-wellness/COVID-19/nfl-presents-mmwr
INTENSIVE PROTOCOL

All meetings held **virtually**

Max weight room **capacity** of 10 players and 5 staff members

**No in-person gatherings** outside of facility or team travel

No seating in cafeteria or meal area; **grab-and-go meals** only

**Locker room use** strongly discouraged and strictly limited to small groups for short periods of time

All players and staff wear **masks or face shields** throughout practice

Players and staff **always wear masks**, including in weight room

Players **required to wear surgical masks during medical treatment / rehab**; face shields also encouraged

**All RT-PCR test results received** before **any** player or staff member enters the facility

https://www.nfl.com/playerhealthandsafety/health-and-wellness/COVID-19/nfl-presents-mmwr
FIGURE. Laboratory-confirmed* COVID-19 cases (N = 329) and mitigation strategies† implemented
National Football League, United States, August 9–November 21, 2020

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e2.htm?s_cid=mm7004e2_w#F1_down
MITIGATION FOR CLOSE CONTACTS?
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IQIVIA & CONTACT TRACING

• Contact tracing conducted by IQVIA

• IQVIA will identify employees and players who had close contact with a positive individual

• They will then follow the COVID return to play protocols
DETAILED INTERVIEWS

• Conducted by trained staff once someone tested positive for COVID-19

• Identify contacts
  – At facility
  – Outside facility

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PROCEDURE FOR “HIGH RISK” CLOSE CONTACT

• Remain on the COVID 19/Reserve List for 5 days

• All Nasal PCR tests must be negative

• Can resume football activities on Day 6
  – Shorter than that recommended in CDC guidance this was deemed acceptable because daily RT-PCR testing with <24-hour turnaround was available
14 days is always preferred as the best way to prevent COVID-19 transmission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Risk</th>
<th>Moderate Risk</th>
<th>High Risk</th>
<th>Very High Risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 days without testing OR 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days</td>
<td>10 days without testing OR 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days</td>
<td>14 days for group settings and organized activities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONLY IF 14 days is not feasible, follow 10 days without testing OR 7 days with negative test results collected at 5-7 days</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 days for individuals unless it causes significant economic or other hardship</td>
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OBSERVATIONS

Midseason, transmission was observed in persons who had cumulative interactions of <15 minutes duration

Implementation and Evolution of Mitigation Measures, Testing, and Contact Tracing in the National Football League, August 9 – November 21, 2020

Weekly / January 29, 2021 / 70(4);130-135

Dawn Aponte, National Football League; Michele Best, University of Maryland Capital Region Health; Paul Blalock, National Football League; Meghan C. Carroll, National Football League; M. Anthony Casolaro, Washington Football Team; Molly Delaney, National Football League; Daniel Eichner, Sports Medicine Research and Testing Laboratory; Larry Ferazani, National Football League; Jacob Frank, National Football League; Christopher J. Hostler, Department of Medicine, Duke Center for Antimicrobial Stewardship and Infection Prevention; Tiffany Koch, IQVIA Real-World Solutions; John Lynch, Department of Medicine, University of Washington; Jimmie Mancell, Department of Medicine, University of Tennessee Health Science Center; Damion Martins, Atlantic Sports Health, Morristown Medical Center; John Mellody, National Football League; Jeff Miller, National Football League; Navdeep Singh, Eden Medical Center; Eric Sugarman, Minnesota Vikings; Leah Triola, National Football League; Patti Walton, Williamson Medical Center.
HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH TRANSMISSION

• Poor mask compliance
• Congregating at meal time
• Partial or unmasked indoor workout sessions
• In-person meetings in small rooms
• Ride-sharing
During the 2020 NFL season, safety protocols helped limit spread of COVID-19

Expanded contact definition to consider

- Distance
- Time
- Mask use
- Ventilation/air flow

Implemented strict protocols after any exposure

- Quarantine for high-risk contacts
- Closure of eating areas
- Strict mask requirements

189 players and staff quarantined after contact*

20 tested positive

No additional spread occurred

* During Oct. 15-Nov. 21

• Intensive Protocol decreased close contacts by 60% from October 1 – November 21,

• No high-risk contacts identified for 71% of traced cases at clubs

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TAKEAWAYS...

• The NFL utilized an intensive testing and tracking strategy

• CDC guidelines + intensive protocol developed to mitigate COVID spread

• Due to this testing/tracking strategy, several high risk behaviors were identified
Thanks!