

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Creates Guidelines
for Safe Return to Play for Team Sports**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) has developed guidelines to help high school and collegiate sports teams plan to safely resume activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The UAMS COVID19 Sports Committee that drafted the recommendations and considerations included experts from sports medicine, orthopaedic surgery, family medicine, pathology and infectious disease.

“Our experts developed these guidelines so teams across the state don’t have to start from scratch as they consider what a safe return to play might look like,” said Wesley Cox, M.D., committee chairman and chief of orthopaedics and sports medicine at UAMS Northwest Regional Campus. “We also wanted to provide some basic expectations for all teams so they feel they can interact and compete with the peace of mind of knowing everyone is holding themselves to the same safety standards. Safe team sports makes for safe students and safe communities.”

Team sports have been suspended in Arkansas because of COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. However, Gov. Asa Hutchinson and Nate Smith, M.D., Arkansas Department of Health director and state health officer, have said they plan to make an announcement about team sports in mid to late May.

Cox wants to help teams prepare for the possible resumption of gameplay.

The guidelines are a resource for teams, coaches, schools and team physicians, as well as student-athletes and their families. They aim to protect student-athletes, as well as staff, administrators and fans.

“We must all work together to safely return to sports,” said C. Lowry Barnes, M.D., committee member and chair of the UAMS Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. “At stake is the health of our athletes, our communities, our economy, our state and our nation. As soon as it is safe to do so, we want athletics to resume. To ensure continued safe play, we must remain diligent in reducing the risk of infection as much as possible.”

The guidelines include:

- Education for coaches and staff
- Quarantine and screening guidelines, plus what to do if a team member tests positive
- Advice for pre-participation screening during physicals
- Guidelines for home life and safe living situations for student-athletes to limit the potential for disease spread
- Tips on team meals, transportation, on-field hydration
- Equipment disinfection
- Best staff and management practices, such as continuing to conduct meetings remotely when possible
- Guidelines for locker rooms and training rooms
- Recommendations on vaccinations

Furthermore, the guidelines encourage teams and student-athletes to be role models in safe infection control in their communities.

“For us all to get back to the activities we love, whether on or off the court, we must be the example and hold ourselves and our teammates and peers accountable for our actions,” Cox said. “We must be the ultimate teammate and assign the health of our teammates – and our communities – as our No. 1 priority.”

The full detailed guidelines are available on the UAMS website at <http://go.uams.edu/high-school> and <http://go.uams.edu/collegiate>.

School physicians and team physicians are encouraged to reach out to UAMS with questions and for additional recommendations at 479-966-4491 or 501-364-8336.

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS’ clinical enterprise including its hospital, regional clinics and clinics it operates or staffs in cooperation with other providers. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. *U.S. News & World Report* named UAMS Medical Center the state’s Best Hospital; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide; and named six areas as high performing — cancer, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. UAMS has 2,727 students, 870 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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