



USA RUGBY

USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES

COVID-19

UPDATED MARCH 9, 2021

This information is a proposed framework for USA Rugby Coaches and Administrators to reference as they determine return to play plans amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The included information is in reference to general protocol offered by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), World Rugby and the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC); tailored to the common activities of the USA Rugby community. It is important to understand that the following outline is not official medical advice, whereby your club and athletes should more definitively refer to the instruction of your local health department guidance on contact sports when determining a return to play plan.

Given the close contact nature of rugby, it is important to note that our sport is at a higher risk of spreading respiratory diseases. The collective rugby community must be considerate through this process. While we are all eager to return to normal rugby procedures, the wellbeing of our friends, family and teammates must remain priority. It is on all of us to acknowledge responsibility and do our part to remain safe and healthy as we get back to rugby.

BE DILIGENT, BE ACCOUNTABLE

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect our communities, requiring diligence and respect when returning to rugby. Ensuring clubs and athletes display the utmost consideration for return to play safe practice is fundamental.

Should provided guidelines from health officials and USA Rugby be discounted or circumvented, potential reinstatement of suspended rugby activities could result along with consequences by local government officials.

IT IS ON ALL OF US TO EXEMPLIFY THE VALUES OF RUGBY AND RESPECT THE WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITY.

UNDERSTANDING THE RISK

RISK IN RUGBY

Rugby is a contact sport. To train and play matches requires intermittent physical contact. High-risk physical contact, where players are in very close proximity (such as scrum, or face to face tackle), most likely poses a greater risk should one player be an infected person. In training, this type of contact should, whenever possible be limited, as should mixing of groups who have undertaken this type of contact. Should a teammate from high-risk physical contact or opposition player in a recent match develop an infection, all of those who have participated in the high-risk contact are likely to require quarantine and testing.

PERSONAL RISK

- Regular exercise is beneficial for your immune system. Prolonged, high intensity exercise may dampen the immune system, particularly when the individual is not used to such high-level activity. Therefore, there is a potentially increased susceptibility to COVID-19 infection in athletes. This risk is probably small and if a practical approach is applied, where players do not exceed normal training load, they should be at no higher risk than the non-exercising population.
- Those who suffer from underlying illness such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease (asthma), diabetes and some forms of cancer appear to be more severely affected by COVID-19. So too are older individuals (>60) and those who are severely obese (BMI 40+).
- Athletes without underlying conditions are not part of the vulnerable group.
- Players who have suffered a COVID-19 infection should immediately notify their coach and/or administrator, then self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days and not engage in exercise for 14 days or until their symptoms settle. When player symptoms have settled, they should consult with their primary care doctor for clearance to return to rugby activity.
- If you have concerns about exercising after testing positive for COVID-19, in particular those who experienced high fever and chest pain during infection, you should discuss this with your primary care doctor.

DEFINITIONS

REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE

- City or County government approved level of social activity and sports activity, pertaining to the risk of COVID-19.

[FIND YOUR CLUB'S LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT »](#)

INTRA vs INTER SQUAD

- Intra-squad – Scrimmage competition with members of your own club
- Inter-squad – Friendly or sanctioned match play with other clubs

TEAM ACTIVITIES

- Non-competitive team gatherings, including but not limited to;
 - Athlete, coach and administrator meetings
 - Pre and post-match socials
 - Non-competition team outings and trips

TRAINING

- Non-competitive rugby activities and/or conditioning, including but not limited to;
 - Cardio
 - Weight room training
 - Strength and Conditioning
 - Set piece drills
 - Scrum, ruck and maul drills
 - Ball training
 - Kick training
 - Intra-squad scrumage

COMPETITION

- Formal or friendly match play of multiple teams;
 - Sanctioned match play
 - Friendly competition with separate club
 - Organized tournaments

INSURANCE COVERAGE

- Terms of USA Rugby provided Accident and Liability Insurance

COMMUNAL EQUIPMENT

- All training gear and items commonly used in rugby, including but not limited to;
 - Clothing/Jerseys
 - Boots/cleats
 - Towels
 - Rugby balls
 - Field markers
 - Tackle and scrum equipment
 - Kicking tees
 - Water bottles
 - Dietary supplements
 - Recovery products
 - Scrum Caps

COMPLIANCE COORDINATOR

- A dedicated player, coach, staff member or volunteer to specifically focus on the compliance of COVID-19 protocols across all club members and activities. Including but not limited to mask wearing, social distancing, attendee recording, symptom screening and communication of compliance standards with opposing teams.

POD TRAINING

- Pod Training requires clubs to arrange players into groups of 15 or less. These groups, or “Pods” will train together and not participate with other pods. This isolates potential spread of COVID-19 across entire clubs, should one player test positive.

CLOSE CONTACT

- Players, coaches or staff recorded in proximity of an individual infected with COVID-19. Coaches and administrators should track individual names and proximities for each training session and/or match play.

COVID-19 DAILY SYMPTOM SCREENING

COVID-19 Daily Symptom Screening should be required protocol for all training and match play

- Completion of a [symptom questionnaire](#) and temperature testing may identify 60% of symptomatic cases.
 - Unions, Competitions and Clubs should arrange a daily symptom reporting protocol, preferably completed in the days leading up to rugby activities and submitted prior to leaving home. A downloadable symptom checker is included in the Resources page of this document and would be most effective if delivered via an online portal such as 'google docs' or similar.
 - Alternatively, numerous app-based symptom-check solutions are available, for example [TeamSnap »](#)
 - Temperature checks upon entering the Club facility, should be contact free and follow a set protocol. Please note that thermometers are of variable quality.
 - Players or non-playing staff with a high temperature or any symptoms should not attend training or the facility. They should contact their primary care doctor by phone to establish the best course of action.

COVID-19 TESTING

While not required with Daily Symptom Screening in place, COVID-19 testing is highly recommended prior to intra-squad and inter-squad contact rugby. Both PCR and Antigen Testing are available from multiple resources, coaches and admin are encouraged to research available options in their area online.

POLYMERASE CHAIN REACTION (PCR) TESTING

- PCR testing is a test used to confirm presence of COVID-19. An individual may be tested by having a swab of their nose and throat, but can also be taken with a saliva sample. The sample is used to culture the virus and confirm whether the individual is infected or not. It should be noted that:
 - This testing is not perfect, there are missed cases (false negatives).
 - If a player is symptomatic despite a negative test, the player should be managed and treated as an infected person.
- A positive test means the individual must immediately inform club administrators, isolate at home for no less than 10 days and consult a primary care doctor for a return to play timeline.
- 'Close contacts' of an infected person from up to 2 days prior to the infected person becoming symptomatic, must also be isolated and assessed.

ANTIGEN TESTING

- Commonly known as "Rapid Tests" Antigen tests usually provide results diagnosing an active coronavirus infection faster than PCR tests, but antigen tests have a higher chance of missing an active infection.
 - This testing is not perfect, there are missed cases (false negatives).
 - If a player is symptomatic despite a negative test, the player should be managed and treated as an infected person.
 - This test is similarly taken by having a swab of the nose and throat, but can also be taken with a saliva sample.
- A positive test means the individual must immediately inform club administrators, isolate at home for no less than 10 days and consult a primary care doctor for a return to play timeline.
- 'Close contacts' of an infected person from up to 2 days prior to the infected person becoming symptomatic, must also be isolated and assessed.

VACCINES

- Because COVID-19 vaccinations may not prevent the carrying or spread of the virus, individuals who have received a COVID-19 vaccination should continue to follow all rules and precautions.



GENERAL RULES TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN RUGBY

1. Education

- Regularly reference your local legislature and advice of medical officials as it pertains to the general risk of COVID-19.
- Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and educate your club members of these details.
- Utilize [World Rugby COVID-19 Education Modules](#).

2. Daily screening

- Complete a [COVID-19 symptom check](#) in the days leading up to rugby activities and before leaving home. This will require you to identify if you have had a high temperature or fever overnight or if you have developed the recognized symptoms.
- Have your temperature checked prior to participating in rugby activities. If your temperature is above 99.6, do not participate in any rugby or group activities.

3. Practice extensive hygiene protocol

- More frequent hand washing, regular disinfection of heavily used areas and surfaces and the use of gloves can reduce the risk of infection. In gathering situations, such as in the gym or during meetings, the wearing of masks is required.
- At home you should also either sanitize or wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap (or use a hand sanitizer) when going to and from your home.
- Avoid touching high-contact surfaces such as door handles, public computer keyboards etc.
- Use hand sanitizers which should be available on entry and in all rooms at your facility or gathering area.
- Try to avoid spitting on the pitch
- Use your elbow or a tissue (always dispose of used tissues) when coughing or sneezing
- Do not share water bottles or use team water bottles
- Do not use communal nutritional supplements

4. Observe social distance rules

- A distance of at least 6 feet between the people present helps to significantly reduce the probability of virus transmission. Due to the movement involved in sports, the distance should be kept at as generous a distance as possible.
- Office, gym and medical facilities should be arranged outdoors if possible and facilitate at least 6 feet of separation between individuals. Where possible, any communal areas should be outdoors or well ventilated.

5. Reduce unnecessary body contact

- Shaking hands, high-fives, embracing and cheering or mourning in a group is to be avoided.

6. Change and shower at home

- The use of locker rooms and showers in training facilities and clubs should be suspended until further notice from your local health department or facility administrator.

7. Transportation

- While social distancing measures are in place, the formation of carpools should be avoided if possible - unless travelling with existing housemate or masks consistently worn by passengers. If taking public transportation, wear a mask at all times while in transit.

8. Go virtual with meetings and celebrations

- In order avoid unnecessary gathering, conduct team and/or club meetings and celebrations virtually.

9. Reduce the size of training groups

- Popularly referred to as “Pod Training”, teams will train in small groups aligned to local government measures in place at that time (example being groups of <5, <10). When small groups train, sessions should be staggered with no overlapping between groups. Smaller groups limit infection risk, and should an infection occur, the number of people who need to isolate is limited.

10. Where possible, outdoor activities are more safe

- Sports and exercise in the fresh air make it easier to maintain distance from others and reduce the risk of infection through the exchange of poorly circulated indoor air.

11. Contact Reconditioning

- With the long hiatus from rugby, a gradual return to contact is important to avoid injury. World Rugby has developed [the “Activate” program](#) to support Strength & Conditioning training for players returning to limited and full contact rugby.





PLAYER MASK WEARING GUIDE

TRAINING AND MATCH PLAY

COACHES, STAFF AND ADMINISTRATORS SHOULD WEAR A MASK OR FACE COVERING AT ALL TIMES

MASKS SHOULD BE WORN BY PLAYERS DURING THE FOLLOWING **TRAINING** ACTIVITIES

- Upon arrival and departure of the training venue, in shared or public transportation
- Teammate discussions at a 6ft distance
- Weight room training
- Scrum, ruck and maul drills
- Ball training and passing drills

MASKS SHOULD BE WORN BY PLAYERS DURING THE FOLLOWING **MATCH PLAY** ACTIVITIES

- Upon arrival and departure of the match venue, in shared or public transportation
- During pre-match warmups
- When on the sideline if not playing and if a designated water carrier

Referees keep mask with them during match play and wear during player and coach discussions at 6ft distance

POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE MANAGEMENT

Positive cases can be managed differently depending on the level of play and environment of the infected individual. Coaches and administrators should consult their local health department, school/college/universities and regional rugby unions for best advice on an appropriate positive case management plan.

Required Action Items

- If tested positive for COVID-19;
 - Require infected individual to immediately isolate for 10 days
 - Inform and isolate 'Close Contacts' of infected individual based on training, pod and match records
 - Suspend further team or club activities
 - Inform all participating individuals of confirmed case and have them follow CDC guidelines for possible symptom recognition.
 - Be sure to follow any further positive case instructions from your local health department, school, college, university, sports facility and regional organization.



RETURN TO PLAY STAGE GUIDELINES

State and local public health departments may have variations on allowable activities in each stage. USA Rugby again encourages clubs to adhere to the policy of their local department of public health.

	REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE	TRAINING	TEAM ACTIVITIES	COMPETITION	INSURANCE
STAGE ONE	STAY AT HOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At home individual training Participant should be symptom free before engaging in training activities Use of personal equipment Rigorously clean and disinfect home training area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All communication and interaction done via virtual method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No inter-squad competition or intra-squad scrimmage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Liability Insurance claims <u>not</u> accepted
STAGE TWO	STAY AT HOME LIFTED SOCIAL DISTANCING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual training at home or Pod Training in outdoor locations. Use of personal equipment Adhering to social distancing rules. Rigorously clean and disinfect training area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All communication and interaction done via virtual method 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No inter-squad competition or intra-squad scrimmage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Liability Insurance claims <u>not</u> accepted
STAGE THREE	NON-CONTACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pod Training under local government approved amount Non-contact drills and activities Daily Symptom Screening No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms. Coaches and Admin wear masks at all times. Rigorously clean and disinfect training area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team meetings and gatherings preferred to be virtual or under local government approved amount. All individuals on site, continue to adhere to social distancing and wearing masks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No inter-squad competition Non-contact intra-squad scrimmage permitted. Daily Symptom Screening required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted
STAGE FOUR	OPEN PUBLIC FACILITIES LIMITED CONTACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pod Training under local government approved amount Scrum, ruck, and maul drills performed with masks. Daily Symptom Screening No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms. Coaches and Admin wear masks. Rigorously clean and disinfect training area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team meetings and gatherings preferred to be virtual or under local government approved amount. All individuals on site, continue to adhere to social distancing and wearing masks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited contact inter-squad friendlies or competition permitted. Limited contact intra-squad scrimmage permitted Sevens and Touch rugby suggested. Daily Symptom Screening required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted.
STAGE FIVE	FRIENDLIES & COMPETITION FULL CONTACT RUGBY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue Pod Training Scrum, ruck, and maul drills - masks preferred. Daily Symptom Screening No participation of players or coaches experiencing symptoms. Coaches and Admin wear masks. Rigorously clean and disinfect training area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team meetings and gatherings preferred to be virtual or under local government approved amount. All individuals on site, continue to adhere to social distancing and wearing masks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full contact inter-squad friendlies or competition permitted. Full contact intra-squad scrimmage permitted Antigen or PCR testing suggested Daily Symptom Screening required Fan attendance permitted with permission from facility and spectator safety measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accident and Liability Insurance claims accepted.

Stage colors above are not related to similar color stages some local health departments have used in reference to COVID-19



GENERAL RETURN TO RUGBY PLAN

PREREQUISITES

COMPLETE WORLD RUGBY COVID-19 LEARNING MODULES



DEVELOP WRITTEN POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE MANAGEMENT PLAN

FIND LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT CONTACT & INFO



NON-CONTACT TRAINING

1. Develop written plans for;
 - a. Daily Symptom Screening, before and on-arrival to training
 - b. Equipment and facility sanitization
 - c. Management of potential COVID-19 positive case
2. Develop written socially distanced "Pod Training" plans;
 - a. Documentation of attendees and pods for 'Close Contact' tracing
 - b. Passing, kicking and conditioning drills (ex. Evasion Games »)
3. Present written plans to local health department and/or facility

Ensure cooperation and compliance from your club for a minimum of two sessions before moving on

LIMITED CONTACT TRAINING

1. Repeat and continue to prioritize tasks 1a - 1c above
2. Develop written plans for contact training with limited exposure
 - a. Scrum, ruck and maul drills with players wearing masks
 - b. Safe open field tackling
 - c. Intra-squad Touch Rugby
 - d. Intra-squad Sevens play
3. Present updated written plans to local health department and/or facility

Ensure cooperation and compliance from your club for a minimum of two sessions before moving on

INTRA-SQUAD SCRIMMAGE

1. Repeat and continue to prioritize tasks 1a - 1c above.
2. Update written plans for symptom screening to reflect player, coach, staff and referee symptom checks for no less than 7 days prior to scrumage.
3. Update written plans for symptom screening to reflect COVID-19 testing of players, coaches, staff and referees; whether Antigen, PCR or both, if applicable.
4. Develop gradual conditioning plan before returning to full contact rugby. Reference World Rugby "Activate" programing »
5. Present updated written plans to local health department and/or facility

Ensure cooperation and compliance from your club for a minimum of two sessions before moving on

FRIENDLIES OR MATCH PLAY

1. Repeat and continue all tasks from "Intra-squad scrumage" period.
2. Ensure opposing players, coaches and staff have also followed proper return to play protocols.
3. Contact rugby must be permitted by the local health department and governing union in the region of both competing teams.
4. Inter-squad friendlies or match play require 7-day symptom screening and/or Antigen or PCR COVID-19 testing prior to arrival on match day.
5. Present updated written plans to local health department and/or facility

USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY

SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATOR CHECK LIST

TRAINING & SCRIMMAGE PREPARATION

- Alert facility management of training and rugby activities. Ensure contact sports are permitted
- Ensure players, coaches and staff have completed symptom screening submissions for minimum of 7 days leading to training
- Bring extra package of disposable masks
- Extensively clean and sanitize all shared contact materials and equipment
- Prepared temperature-check station preferred
- Provide social distancing rules, either by signage or verbal communication
- No shared water coolers

FRIENDLY & MATCH PREPARATION

- Alert facility management of match and rugby activities. Ensure contact sports are permitted.
- Ensure players, coaches, staff and referees from both clubs have completed symptom screening submissions for minimum of 7 days leading to training
- Ensure limited contact or contact sports are permitted in the local health region of both clubs
- Coordinate safe protocol compliance with both clubs ahead of match day
- Bring extra package of disposable masks to training
- Extensively clean and sanitize all shared contact materials and equipment
- Prepared temperature-check station preferred
- Provide social distancing rules, either by signage or verbal communication
- No shared water coolers

PLAYERS

- Ensure players have completed Daily Symptom Screening
- Try to avoid carpool travel to venue
- Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- Change and shower at home
- Bring individual equipment
 - Boots
 - Jersey
 - Water bottle
 - Supplements
 - Facemask
- Communicate non-contact or limited contact rules
- If conducting Antigen or PCR testing, have players provide documentation



USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY

SUGGESTED ADMINISTRATOR CHECK LIST

COACHES

- Ensure coaches have completed Daily Symptom Screening
- Assign volunteer Compliance Coordinator (Definitions page)
- Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- Ensure coaches wear a mask at all times and adhere to 6ft social distancing rules
- Prepared training plan for non-contact, limited contact or match play
- Collect a detailed list of all participants/staff/visitors at any training session, friendly or competition

SPECTATORS

- Refrain from spectators above local gathering allowance
- Develop socially distanced spectator areas with support of venue
- Ensure spectators have not shown symptoms in previous 14 days
- Conduct World Rugby Symptom Checker
- Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- Ensure social distancing rules are communicated
- Bring facemask and wear at all times

WARM-UPS

- Athletes continue to wear facemask while warming up, including during scrum, ruck and maul drills
- Stretching and conditioning occur at 6ft social distance
- Continue to ensure no shared equipment outside of rugby balls and communal equipment that should be continually sanitized

OFFICIALS

- Preferred: No requirement for officials during training activities
- Ensure officials completed Daily Symptom Screening.
- Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- Change and shower at home
- Ensure officials adhere to 6ft social distancing rules
- Bring facemask and wear when communicating with coaches or players

DEPARTING VENUE

- Extensively clean and sanitize all equipment and contact surfaces
- Inquire with venue management on disinfection of field surface, if necessary. Particularly synthetic field venues
- Ensure attendees do not congregate post rugby activities
- No exchange of personal items



RETURN TO PLAY FAQ

RECOGNIZED SYMPTOMS

Symptoms that may appear 2-14 days after exposure:

- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fever or chills



Or at least two of the following:

- Fatigue
- Repeated shaking with chills
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- New loss of taste or smell
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I'M EXPERIENCING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?

- Do not participate in any rugby or team activities if experiencing symptoms, precaution is most important. Immediately inform your club administrator and consult a primary care doctor.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I TEST POSITIVE FOR COVID-19?

- Immediately inform your club administrator of your positive case and isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days. Individuals may not return to play until cleared by a primary care doctor.

WHERE CAN I FIND INFO ON MY REGIONAL HEALTH MANDATE?

[VISIT DIRECTORY »](#)

HOW LONG WILL EACH PHASE LAST?

- It is unclear how long each phase will last. These timelines will be determined by local government and health officials based on the level of infection, testing availability, vaccinations and overall preparedness of COVID-19 in your region.

IS INFECTION OF COVID-19 COVERED BY MY USA RUGBY INSURANCE?

- It's important to note there will not be coverage for liability and accident claims related to COVID-19 regardless of timing, return-to-play protocols or government mandate.
- Communicable Diseases like COVID-19 are commonly excluded from insurance coverages, where pandemics are also traditionally not covered.

WHERE CAN I ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT RUGBY IN MY REGION DURING PHASES?

- We would first suggest you contact local health officials with immediate questions. You can also consult your local governance organization, contact info for those groups are below. High Schools and Colleges should first and foremost consult their school sports administrators. Questions to USA Rugby can be emailed, membership@usa.rugby.

[YOUTH & HIGH SCHOOL » STATE GOVERNING BODY CONTACT LIST](#)

[COLLEGIATE » CONFERENCE CONTACT LIST](#)

[SENIOR CLUB » GEOGRAPHIC UNION CONTACT LIST](#)

WHERE CAN I FIND FUTURE INFORMATION ON RETURN TO PLAY SUGGESTED PROTOCOL?

- Visit the Resources information of this document.



USA RUGBY

RESOURCES



CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT DIRECTORY

[VISIT DIRECTORY »](#)

CLEANING & DISINFECTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

[READ GUIDELINES »](#)

CONTACT TRACING

[READ GUIDELINES »](#)



WORLD RUGBY

WORLD RUGBY COVID-19 SYMPTOM CHECKER (Daily Symptom Screening)

[DOWNLOAD »](#)

WORLD RUGBY COVID-19 EDUCATION MODULES FOR COACHES & ADMIN

[TAKE COURSES »](#)

WORLD RUGBY "ACTIVATE" RETURN TO CONTACT CONDITIONING

[SEE RESOURCES »](#)



UNITED STATES OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE (USOPC)

USOPC COVID-19 UPDATES & RESOURCES

[VISIT RESOURCES »](#)



USA RUGBY

USA RUGBY REAL TIME COVID-19 UPDATES

[VISIT DEDICATED WEBPAGE »](#)

NFHS GUIDANCE FOR OPENING HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS

[READ GUIDELINES »](#)

HIGH PERFORMANCE "COACHING COVID AWARE" WEBINAR

[WATCH REPLAY »](#)

