



**USA RUGBY**

# **USA RUGBY RETURN TO PLAY GUIDELINES**

COVID-19

**UPDATED SEPTEMBER 1, 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.

# 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 is not required, however highly suggested 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

*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

- While the vaccine continues to support an end to the pandemic, it does not prevent the carrying or spread of the virus. Therefore, individuals who are fully vaccinated are still suggested to continue following all rules and precautions – particularly if members of their club, facility, friends and family are not fully vaccinated. Members are otherwise encouraged to follow local health guidelines around mask wearing and social distancing for indoor and outdoor sports activities in their area, particularly in regard to vaccination status.



# 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.





# **MASK WEARING GUIDE**

## TRAINING AND MATCH PLAY

*THE FOLLOWING MASK GUIDELINES ARE SUGGESTED PROTOCOL. HOWEVER, MEMBERS SHOULD CONSULT LOCAL HEALTH REQUIREMENTS SURROUNDING MASK WEARING, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO VACCINATION STATUS.*

### 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*

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## **POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE MANAGEMENT**

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 follow local health guidelines on positive case based on vaccination status.
  - Inform and isolate 'Close Contacts' of infected individual based on training, pod and match records.
  - Be sure to follow any further positive case instructions from your local health department, school, college, university, sports facility and regional organization.





# 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. 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. Research local mask mandates, particular to indoor/outdoor activities and vaccination status.

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, if locally mandated for indoor/outdoor sports.
  - b. Safe open field tackling
  - c. Intra-squad Touch Rugby
  - d. Intra-squad Sevens play
3. Research local mask mandates, particular to indoor/outdoor activities and vaccination status.

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. Develop gradual conditioning plan before returning to full contact rugby. Reference World Rugby "Activate" programing »
4. Research local mask mandates, particular to indoor/outdoor activities and vaccination status.

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 scrimmage" period.
2. Ensure opposing players, coaches and staff have also followed proper return to play protocols.
3. Contact sports must be permitted by the local health department and governing union in the region of both competing teams.
4. 7-day symptom screening and/or Antigen or PCR COVID-19 testing are suggested for inter-squad friendlies or match play prior to arrival on match day.
5. Research local mask mandates, particular to indoor/outdoor activities and vaccination status.

# 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.
- 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.
- 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

- 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 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 if required by local health mandate.
- 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

- Ensure spectators have not shown symptoms in previous 14 days
- Prioritize extensive hygiene practices
- Ensure social distancing rules are communicated
- Bring facemask and wear at all times if required by local health mandate.

### WARM-UPS

- 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

- Ensure officials completed 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, if required by local health mandate.

### 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
- 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 »](#)

## 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?

- 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](mailto:membership@usa.rugby).

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

[COLLEGIATE » CONFERENCE CONTACT LIST](#)

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

# 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 »](#)

