



To  
European Rugby Unions in Membership of Rugby Europe

March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Subject:** Return to Play

Dear Unions,

With the gradual easing of various lock-down conditions a return to play protocols now being exercised, Rugby Europe wishes to emphasise the safety guidelines and best practice with everyone's well-being paramount in ensuring its success across the continent.

With this in mind, we include correspondence from Chairs of the Rugby Committee and Development Sub-Committee, Rob Udwin and Jens Nielsen, on the recommended Covid-19 Return to play procedures for teams and unions.

Rob Udwin said, "As Europe emerges from the horrific year we have all experienced, we are collectively going to have to work harder than ever to protect and grow our precious sport and the values that it represents. Our Rugby Europe staff have been hard at work to produce some resources that may be of use to you and your Union, and I commend them to you.

May I wish all Unions the best of luck in your efforts to get rugby re-established in your region, and to ensure that a new generation of young people benefit from the sport in the way that we all have."

Jens Skage Nielsen added, "For many of our players the time away from training and community rugby has been very long due to Covid-19.

It's therefore great to now see the light at the end of the tunnel. Our staff at Rugby Europe has been developing guidelines to help us all return to play in a safe manner.

It will be important to respect this gradual return to play process, while at the same time adhering to guidelines from your local authorities in order to stay safe both on and off the field".

More information and guidelines can be found [here](#). Two useful infographics can be found below.

Should you have any question, please feel free to contact Rugby Europe Staff.

# Rugby and COVID-19

## Return-to-play guidelines



**1**  
Respect government rules and guidance: anyone displaying any symptoms should not train or play



**2**  
Bring and use your own water bottle only



**3**  
Bring and use your own clothing and training equipment only



**4**  
Arrive at training on your own by walking, bike or car. Try to avoid public transport and do not car share



**5**  
Clean and disinfect your hands before, after and during training



**6**  
Arrive shortly before training and go straight to the pitch



**7**  
Follow directions for entering and leaving the pitch



**8**  
Respect social distancing when training and follow union guidance  
\* local variation of WHO guideline



**9**  
Have fun, but do not celebrate with or high-five team-mates



**10**  
Clean and disinfect rugby balls, changing them regularly



**11**  
Enjoy being back playing rugby



**12**  
Only scrummage against scrum machines at training



**13**  
Keep any tackling low to reduce transmission risk



**14**  
Do not spit or clear your nose, where possible do not handle your gumshield, until after training



**15**  
Return home immediately after training



# Rugby and COVID-19

## What you need to know

COVID-19 is typically spread in cough or respiratory droplets

### You could get the virus if you:

- Come into close proximity with someone who has **the virus, especially if they are coughing or sneezing**
- Touch surfaces that someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed **on and bring your unwashed hands to your face (eyes, nose or mouth)**

### Close contact means spending more than 15 cumulative minutes within one metre of an infected person (WHO guidance)

- The risk is higher indoors **or in enclosed spaces**
- Outdoor activity has **a lower transmission risk than indoor activity**
- Airborne droplets transmit the virus rather **than physical contact**
- Rugby has natural social **distancing in an offside line**
- Typical rugby cumulative high transmission-risk contact is between **13 minutes for the tight five and one minute for outside backs**

### How you can reduce the risk in rugby:

- Encourage lower **tackling height, to limit face-to-face contact**
- Get the ball away from the base of the scrum **and ruck quicker**
- Change headgear, jerseys and shorts at half-time
- Arrive at training or matches on your own
- Do not share water bottles
- Avoid unnecessary contact in training and game celebrations or huddles
- Respect social distancing during breaks in play
- Disinfect rugby balls and hands before, during and after training and matches
- Disinfect hands before, during and after training and matches
- Do not spit, clear noses **or take out mouthguards**
- Go straight to the training pitch and leave **immediately after**
- Cover your face with **your sleeve or elbow when coughing or sneezing**



Read more at <https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/covid-19>