

Rugby Union - preventing injury

Rugby union is a popular football code for all ages and is played by juniors right through to adults. It is a contact sport that requires strength, speed and ball-handling and kicking skills. A high proportion of injuries associated with rugby occur during the tackle.

Common injuries

In men's rugby, parts of the body commonly injured include the:

- Lower limbs
- Upper limbs
- Head and face.

Schoolboy rugby and women's rugby have a higher incidence of injury to the head and face, including concussion, than other levels of rugby union.

Preventing injury

To prevent injury, you should:

- Be prepared
- Use good technique and practices
- Wear the right protective gear
- Check the environment
- Know yourself and the sport.

Be prepared

Suggestions include:

- Do some physical pre-season preparation during the off-season, and get advice on a conditioning program from either a coach or fitness advisor.
- Develop your individual and team skills, with guidance from your coach, before playing in competitive situations.
- Consider having a pre-participation medical screening, with a qualified and experienced practitioner (such as a sports physician or a general practitioner with sports medicine interest). This is highly recommended for children, new players and those older than 35.
- Warm up, stretch and cool down. A standard warm-up (15–30 minutes) should consist of aerobic activity, stretching and skills practice.
- Follow a regular stretching program to increase and maintain your flexibility.

Use good technique and practices

Suggestions include:

- Use the correct techniques for stretching. Get advice from a coach or trainer.
- Introduce tackling progressively if you are a new player and make sure you receive regular skills training.
- Try to remain on your feet at the breakdown. Regular training of correct team play for the breakdown is important, as this is how you prevent foul play.
- Follow the correct techniques for de-powering the scrum at all times.

- Regular re-accreditation and education should be undertaken by coaches to ensure their knowledge is up to date.
- Make sure umpires are accredited and that team members stick to the rules to reduce the risk of injury.

Wear the right protective gear

Suggestions include:

- Seek professional advice on footwear.
- Consider preventive ankle taping or bracing to reduce injury risks.
- Wear a mouthguard at all times during games and practices.
- Check mouthguards regularly and replace them if they are damaged or broken. Replacement should be more frequent for growing children.
- Consult a sports medicine practitioner about the value of using protective equipment if you have a previous severe injury.

Check the environment

Suggestions include:

- Check and maintain the playing surface to remove hazards.
- Provide adequate run-off area around the ground.
- Check that posts are padded and secured firmly to the ground with no part posing a tripping risk.

Know yourself and the sport

Suggestions include:

- Choose activities that are suited to your fitness level.
- Follow the rules and play fairly.
- Know and use the right techniques.

Other safety tips

Remember to:

- Drink water before, during and after play.
- Make sure qualified first aid personnel, first aid kits, icepacks and a stretcher are available at all times.
- Check that there is telephone access, to contact emergency services.

Respond promptly to injuries

If you or someone else is injured:

- Seek prompt attention from qualified first aid personnel.
- Make sure you are fully rehabilitated before returning to play.
- Wear a support aid like an ankle brace for at least three months after serious ankle injury.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Always call triple zero for an ambulance in an emergency Tel. 000
- Physiotherapist
- Smartplay Tel. (03) 9674 8777

Things to remember

- Rugby union is a contact sport that requires strength, speed and ball-handling and kicking skills.
- A high proportion of injuries associated with rugby occur during the tackle.
- Using the right techniques and equipment for the sport can help prevent injury.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:

Smartplay

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