
Rugby codes - preventing injury

Summary

- 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.
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Rugby union and rugby league are popular football codes for all ages and are played by juniors right through to adults. They are contact sports that require strength, speed, and ball-handling and kicking skills. A high proportion of injuries associated with rugby occur during the tackle.

Common injuries playing rugby

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 rugby injuries

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 before playing rugby

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 make sure their knowledge is up to date.
- Make sure umpires are accredited and that team members play by 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 training sessions.
- 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 before playing rugby

Suggestions include:

- Check and maintain the playing surface to remove hazards.
- Provide adequate run-off areas 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 of rugby

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.
- Consider wearing a support aid like an ankle brace after a 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.

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