



Qatar Rugby Federation

Return to Play National Guidelines in the  
context of COVID-19

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The most recent changes or additions are marked by [blue text](#)

Return to Play National Guidelines

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## Return to Play Guidelines

### 1. Purpose

This is a resource document developed by the Qatar Rugby Federation (QRF) to help anyone who will be returning to rugby training during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The main objective of these guidelines is to provide an overview of what is to be expected as rugby training resumes for; players, coaches, management and medical staff. As the situation will continue to change, this is a live document that will be updated regularly, therefore it should be referred to frequently.

These guidelines are in accordance with recommendations set by: The Qatar National Government, The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), The World Health Organization (WHO), Asia Rugby, and World Rugby.

### 2. Scope

The scope of this policy is for the rugby community in Doha, Qatar. Players, coaches, management, medical staff and volunteers. The scope will comply with local law and any policies that are implemented by the government. Individual rugby clubs should confer with the Qatar Rugby Federation before the commencement of training and should use this framework to create policies for return to activity within their own jurisdiction.

### 3. Definitions

**A Confirmed Person:** A person who has tested positive for COVID-19 with a laboratory test

**Suspected Person:** An individual who is showing symptoms of COVID-19 but has not been tested OR an individual who has been in close contact with a confirmed COVID-19 individual

**Close contact :** Is an individual who has either: been in contact with a confirmed individual for more than 15minutes within 1.8m OR someone who has provided direct care for a confirmed individual

**Low Risk contact:** Is an individual who may not have had any contact with the confirmed case in any capacity but may need to self-isolate and monitor for symptoms.

**Asymptomatic:** A confirmed COVID-19 individual who does not show any symptoms, but are still positive and contagious

**Contact Tracing:** The process of identifying contacts of a confirmed person to reduce the spread of a virus. This process is conducted by the Public Health Authorities.

#### **4. COVID-19**

COVID-19 is the ongoing pandemic caused by SARS-CoV-2. As it is new, there is still much that is unknown about the infectious virus. In this respect, it is important to stay up to date with information as laid out by the WHO and other Public Health Authorities alike, for any changes and developments that may occur.

##### **4.1. What are the common symptoms?**

It is important to note that some individuals will be asymptomatic and not show any symptoms, but they are still contagious. Of those who do develop symptoms, 15-20% may require hospitalization but the majority can manage their symptoms at home. The common symptoms for a COVID-19 infection include the following:

- Fever equal to or above 38°C
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Shortness of breath
- Tiredness
- Loss of smell or taste
- Diarrhoea

##### **4.2. How is COVID-19 Spread?**

At this point in time, it is known that the virus is primarily transmitted by person-to-person contact via small droplets from the nose or mouth. For example:

- An infected person cough, sneezes, talks or spits and those droplets go directly into your eyes, mouth or nose
- An infected person has traces of the virus on their hands and makes direct contact with you (e.g. by shaking hands) and then you touch your face
- Droplets can become airborne particles which can hang in the air. This risk increases in enclosed spaces such as restaurants and gyms.
- There is some evidence that COVID-19 can be transmitted through faecal matter

Once infected, it can take up to 14 days to show symptoms, although the average time is 5-6 days

##### **4.3. How can you protect yourself from COVID-19?**

Individuals can take the following steps to reduce their risk of transmitting or obtaining COVID-19:

- Washing hands frequently with soap and water for 20s, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Maintain physical distancing

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- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth
- Practice good cough and sneeze etiquette
- Seek medical care early if you are suffering from one of the above symptoms

### **4.4. At Risk Individuals**

It is important to note that although the virus does not discriminate, there are vulnerable groups within society who appear to be more severely affected by COVID-19. Those aged >60 and above and those who are severely obese (BMI +40) In addition, those who suffer from an underlying health conditions stated below, should receive medical clearance before returning to play as they are of a higher risk. These include:

- Chronic Kidney Disease
- COPD
- Weekend Immune System
- Obesity (BMI of 30 or higher)
- Serious Heart Conditions, such as heart failure
- Sickle Cell Disease
- Type 2 Diabetes

Athletes are not considered to be part of the vulnerable groups listed above, however, household members may fall into these categories and therefore must be given consideration when players and staff return to play. If an individual start to shows symptoms before or at training, see section 8.

It is advised that if a player lives with an individual who suffers from any of the above conditions, that they do not attend training. If you are concerned, please speak to your team manager or the COVID-19 manager.

### **5. Appointment of a COVID-19 Manager**

QRF appointed a COVID-19 Manager. The manager should have operational knowledge of COVID-19 and where possible, clinical knowledge. The manager will coordinate with their club for a phased approach to training and playing.

- The manager will liaise with QRF and Local Clubs to:
  - Present a phased return to play and train strategy based on Government measures. The strategy will be aligned to the WHO Risk Assessment Tool for mass gatherings
  - Provide evidence that all players, coaches and staff have undergone the appropriate training and personal safety measures
  - Present a clear communication strategy with local clubs QRF and the QOC.

The manager should work with an operational lead to implement the guidance in this document.

### 6. Government Restrictions

In Qatar, the government have enforced several measures to mitigate the transmission of COVID in the community, which include:

- Social distancing measures of 1.8m
- The mandatory wearing of masks when outdoors (unless exercising)
- The compulsory download of the COVID-19 tracing App 'Ehteraz' which must be green when entering any facility
- Mandatory temperature checks when entering facilities

Qatar has issued a phased approach to reduce the nationwide restrictions. The phased approach is the framework that will guide the QRF's return to play with highlights below:

Phase 2, 1<sup>st</sup> of July:

- Group social gatherings of 5 or less people
- Professional training of small groups held outdoors or in large open spaces, less than 10 people.

Phase 3, 1<sup>st</sup> August:

- Medium social gatherings of 40 people or less
- Team trainings of less than 40 people
- Amateur sports team / competitions (no spectators) can commence with less than 40 people
- Low risk inbound flights

Phase 4, September:

- Opening of mosques across the country
- Gatherings of 15 people indoors, 30 people outdoors
- Expansion of inbound flights
- Summer camps and summer clubs open
- Sports related mass gatherings local and international competitions.
- Opening of cinemas and theatres with a 15% capacity

For more detail, please refer to: <https://www.gco.gov.qa/en/preventative-measures/>

### 7. Screening

It is important that team managers follow the below at rugby training, before and during.

#### 7.1. Screening

Anyone who is connected to the rugby environment, must prior to any involvement of training, playing, managing or volunteering must sign the COVID-19 Disclaimer and the

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Medical Release Form. In addition, prior to starting training they must confirm with their respective manager that they:

- Are free from COVID-19;
- Have not suffered from any of the aforementioned symptoms in the last 14 days;
- Have not been in contact with a confirmed or suspected case in the last 14 days;
- Are not a close contact to any confirmed case in the last 14 days;
- Will abide by the contact tracing requirements as stipulated by MOPH, QRF, their Club and / or the venue.

### 7.2. Health Surveillance and Protocols for Training

Prior to each training session, the team manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- Their players confirms that they are attending training;
- The player confirms that they have no symptoms on the day of training

At training, the following steps must be taken by each team manager:

- Take and record the temperature of each player;
- Record the team's attendance;
- Provide the attendance sheet, with the players ID number, contact number and recorded temperature to security at the end of each training session.

## 8. Players and COVID-19 Status

**All guidance below is in accordance with the MOPH and Government of Qatar. If an individual need's advice or guidance, please call 16000.**

### 8.1. Symptom development

There are two scenarios which could occur when developing symptoms.

#### 8.1.1. Symptoms before training

If an individual feels unwell OR displays any of the symptoms listed above OR is suspected of having COVID-19:

- The individual cannot attend training
- The individual must call 16000 for guidance
- The individual must update their manager. The manager must inform the COVID-19 manager and QRF

#### 8.1.2. Symptoms at training

If an individual starts to display any of the above symptoms, they should notify either the medical staff, coach or manager.

- The individual should be isolated in the designated isolation room immediately (this is marked by an Isolation Room sign) and all should be wearing masks
- **The manager should call the players parents**
- **The parents must call 16000 for guidance**

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- Management and isolation of the potential positive case and close contacts will be directed by the MOPH.
- The manager must inform the COVID-19 manager and QRF.

### 8.2. 'Close Contact' Status

If any individual is informed that they are a close contact who requires testing, they must follow the guidance set by the MOPH:

- Self-isolate, ordinarily for 14 days regardless of the test result or if they show symptoms.
  - If symptoms develop, contact 16000
- It is the duty of the individual to inform their team manager of their status, the team manager will inform the COVID-19 manager and QRF.
- The individual **cannot** attend training during this time and can only return once 14 days have passed since their last day of exposure and once, they have conferred with their team manager.
- For any clarification, contact the COVID-19 manager

If an individual has not been notified by the MOPH that they are a close contact, but they determine that they are, they cannot attend training for 14 days since their last day of exposure.

### 8.3. A Positive Case

If a player or member of a rugby club tests positive:

- The player falls under the MOPH jurisdiction
- They must notify their team manager immediately, who will notify the COVID-19 Manager who will notify the QRF
- The positive player must follow the Government Guidance: self-isolate for 14 days.
- It is the responsibility of the MOPH to contact trace known close contacts, however, close contacts of the positive case must be notified. (see definition for guidance)
- The player cannot return to training until 14 days have passed since their laboratory positive result and once, they have conferred with their team manager

QRF and the COVID-19 manager will determine the course of action for training sessions for the rest of the team in accordance with government guidance.

If an individual is required to be tested outside of the regulations set by the QRF and the QOC, even as a low risk contact, they must inform their team manager. The individual *may* not be able to attend training for 7 days since their test.

It is the duty of the players to inform their manager or medical staff they are subject to the above or similar scenarios. If they do not, they could face a disciplinary action from QRF.



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Disclaimer: Each player's scenario in the COVID-19 pandemic context will be addressed case by case. It is the responsibility of club management and the COVID-19 manager to decide on the best action.

### 9. Rugby Return to Play Phases

In line with the Government's gradual lifting of restrictions as well as guidance from the QOC, the below phases will be introduced for Rugby Training but are subject to change.

Phase 2, July:

- Outdoor training, 10 people or less
- 1.8m minimum distance at all times
- No sharing of equipment
- No contact
- Focus on: solo training, group fitness, independent drills
- No spectators allowed

Phase 2.5, July 22<sup>nd</sup>:

- Outdoor training, 10 people or less
- 1.8m minimum distance always between players
- No contact drills
- Ball handling can commence within pre-defined groups: players who live in the same household, and / or socialise within the Government restrictions. No more than 5 people in a group for ball handling. Balls must be regularly sanitized

Phase 3, August 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Outdoor training, less than 40 people (will need to be revised)
  - o Two separate groups of players to reduce the risk of transmission
- 1.8m minimum distance always between players
- No contact drills
- Ball handling can commence between players, with regular sanitization
- Sharing of equipment, such as tackling bags, can commence with regular sanitization between players

Phase 4, September 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Indoor training, 40 people but not exceeding 30% capacity of space
- Outdoor training, 80 people with social distancing
- Have a medical person designated on site is advisable
- Vulnerable groups to stay home
- Avoid physical contact
- Regulate entry to ensure training does not become crowded

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Phase 5, December 1<sup>st</sup>:

- Return to contact, see 9.1

### 9.1. Rugby Return to Contact Phases

For Phase 1, if a coach coaches any minis and youth team *and* they are a player for any senior section (including the touch rugby league), that coach **cannot** partake in touch or tag with their mini and youth team. There cannot be a cross over for players between tag and touch.

The below measures must be maintained:

- The regular use of hand sanitisers for players and coaches, as well as the regular sanitization of equipment throughout training – especially rugby tags;
- Avoid touching high-contact surfaces and players must avoid touching their face
- The submission of the symptom checker of players to their team manager prior to attending **any** training session; if a player is experiencing **any** symptoms, they cannot attend training

#### 9.1.1. Minis & Youth

Phase 1, November 29<sup>th</sup>:

- Outdoor training *only* for tag rugby
- Tag rugby can be played for no longer than 20 minutes
- Tag rugby to be played only **once** a week. For example, if a team trains twice a week, they can only play one tag rugby session out of the two sessions, for Phase 1
- Social distancing of 1.8m to be maintained in drills when tag rugby is *not* being played
- Rugby tags to be sanitized before and after the tag rugby session
- Avoid body-to-body contact

#### 9.1.2. Seniors

Phase 1, November 29<sup>th</sup>:

- Outdoor training *only* for touch rugby
- Social distancing of 1.8m to be maintained in drills when touch rugby is not being played

Touch Rugby Rules:

- Touch below the chest only
- All players must sanitise their hands before, during and after the session
  - Players must sanitize their hands a minimum of twice throughout the touch session.
- Players must abide by the above rules. If a player breaks the rules will be cautioned, after 2 warnings the players will be sent off the pitch
- Coaches are not allowed to partake in touch rugby for the section they are coaching

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The coaches and COVID-19 Manager are responsible to ensure that the regulations are followed. If players or teams fail to abide by the above measures, they could be subject to disciplinary action from QRF.

### 9.1.3. Touch Rugby Phased Return

A four-week round robin trail RTP league will be played **only** with QRF registered players who are **already** training at Onazia, this includes Camels, National Players and DRFC.

COVID-19 measures:

- A register must be taken at the start of each league day and handed to the grounds security which contains the players: temperature, ID and contact information
- Players will also be subject to temperature checks prior to their match, Ehteraz App checking prior to entering the facilities
- Teams will only be allowed to attend their scheduled match; they will not be able to watch other matches
- Players will sign a waiver form acknowledging the risks prior to playing in the Touch rugby league.

Touch Rugby:

- A maximum of ten people per team, they must all registered *before* the start of the league.
- Players can only play for **one** team, there will be no filling for other teams. If your team is short, please contact the league manager
- All players must be 15 years and older
- Normal touch rugby rules to apply
- The league will run for four weeks for phase 1

Phase 2 of Return to Contact to be reviewed part way through Phase 1.

## 10. Resumption of activities and risks

The duration and intensity of the exercise that will be implemented at training is a decision decided between the coach, team manager medical staff and players. Following a period of more than four weeks without rugby training, there is an increased risk of injury if a re-conditioning period is not observed. Regular exercise is beneficial for the immune system.

**However, pro-longed 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.

As restrictions reduce, it is possible that the community could see a surge in the number of COVID positive cases which will require the re-introduction of a restriction measure. At the moment, returning to play rugby will always focus on the basic principles of hygiene and social distancing. Full squad, full contact training can only occur in accordance with the QOC and Government guidance.

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It is important to note that until a vaccine is developed for COVID-19, the team training environment for rugby will be very different in comparison to pre-COVID-19.

Rugby is a contact sport and therefore players will become close contacts once full training commences. This would mean that if a player or an opponent tests positive for the virus, it is likely that players would need to self-isolate and require testing.

### **11. Coaches Responsibility**

The coach will manage and plan training sessions accordingly, they are responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of themselves and the players. The coach must ensure that the training guidelines are in line with local laws and follow the guidance set by the QOC. The coach must also abide by the same guidelines set out for the players. The coach **must** wear a mask at all times when they are not taking part in physical activity.

### **12. Player Responsibility**

This section is for all players who wish to return to rugby. It should be read in its entirety by all who will be attending, including the coaches, medical staff and management.

#### **12.1. Education**

- Each player wishing to return to rugby training should read this document in its entirety to familiarise themselves with the current environment and their parents if under 17 years of age
- Each player and their parents if under the age of 17, should complete the online course for returning to play, developed by World Rugby. Once completed, a confirmation can be downloaded and presented to Club management as evidence of completion

<https://playerwelfare.worldrugby.org/covid-19-courses>

#### **12.2. Daily Screening**

- Each player should report to their team manager that they are either symptom free or are suffering from one of the common COVID-19 symptoms. If any symptoms have developed, players should call 16000 and stay home to self-isolate.
- Temperature checks will be done before entering the training facility
- The Ehteraz App will be checked if old enough, it must be green.

#### **12.3. Hygiene rules**

- Frequent hand washing and / or use of alcohol base hand sanitizer
- Avoid touching high contact surfaces such as door handles
- Adopt respiratory hygiene measures: cough into your elbow, avoid spitting etc.
- Do not share water bottles
- Do not bring food to the training grounds
- The use of changing rooms and showers is suspended until further notice therefore players should arrive ready to train in appropriate kit

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- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth where possible.

### **12.4. Social distancing rules (when non-contact training is enforced)**

- A distance of a minimum of 1.8m between players must be enforced

### **12.5. Reduce body contact**

- Avoid shaking hands, clapping, embracing or cheering. Until Government lockdown measures are reduced, physical contact **must** be avoided

### **12.6. Suspension of car pooling**

- In line with the Government recommendations, the sharing of cars must be limited to family / household members only, or 1 individual with an Uber driver until further notice

### **12.7. Masks**

- Masks should be worn to and from training
- Masks should be worn between training drills if team discussions are held
- The proper donning and doffing of masks should be adhered to avoid cross contamination or mask spoiling
- For further guidance on proper mask wearing, seek out the WHO website.

These measures are in place to ensure the safety of all those who will be returning to rugby training. Remember, players also have a high risk of contacting the virus through an infected person while out participating in the regular community activities, such as shopping. Ensure you abide by the Government guidelines of wearing a mask and adopting the social distancing measures and basic hand hygiene.

## **13. Player Injury and Treatment**

Medical staff should always ensure they are wearing a mask when interacting with players. In the event where a player or individual is injured and /or requires first AID treatment by Medical Staff, or if a player is unconscious, PPE must be worn where possible. For any queries, guidance can be sought from the QRF Medical Staff.

## **14. Facility Preparation**

This section includes advice on how to prepare an environment for club training, for use under the current restriction levels. In the same way that everyday facilities have been impacted by COVID-19, such as shopping centres, the same adoption of measures must be applied to the sporting facilities. The following measures should be adopted:

### **14.1. Facility Preparation Checklist:**

- Separate entry and exit points to avoid close contact and contamination of surfaces
- A dedicated isolation facility should be available, should an individual become unwell at training
- Appropriate signage informing attendants of the COVID mitigation requirements

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- Hand hygiene: At the training facilities, hand sanitizers should be available on entry and exit points
- The use of communal areas are prohibited: Showers, changing and meeting rooms.

For areas that cannot be avoided, such as the bathrooms, soap and water must be available as well as hand sanitizers. Efforts must be made to prevent congregating in this area to enforce the 1.8m social distancing rule.

### **14.2. Maintenance Plan**

In alignment with the WHO guidelines, the facilities should be cleaned **each day**, if they are not cleaned, training cannot commence. In addition, the following must be enforced:

- If equipment is used, these should be cleaned more regularly;
  - o Balls should be cleaned every 10m or when the drill changes
  - o Tackle bags after each tackle
- Doors should be wedged open, so that handles are not used;
- An isolation room must be readily available and cleaned daily

### **15. Documents and policies**

The following documents exist to aid the RTPGs:

- Managerial symptom checklist
- Managerial training checklist
- Managerial protocols for COVID-19 scenarios and players

The following documents must be signed by players or their parents/guardians prior to commencing training:

- Medical Release Form
- A Club COVID-19 Waiver

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