



UPDATED CONDITIONING GUIDANCE FOR TEAM STRENGTH & CONDITIONING AND MEDICAL STAFF WORKING IN ENGLISH RUGBY MARCH 25th 2020

This guidance is for team S&C and medical staff working in English rugby who are providing conditioning and rehabilitation services for players during the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and is based on current government advice (as of 25th March 2020). There is additional guidance which has been provided regarding the medical services provision and the ongoing care of injured players.

Following the government statement on the 16th March 2020, the Rugby Football Union suspended all rugby activity in England until the 14th April 2020 (subject to continued review). Rugby activity includes club training, league and cup matches plus rugby education courses. All rugby skills training both contact and non-contact and all team and group based conditioning activities should cease.

The statement also stated that “where possible, players at all levels are encouraged to maintain their own personal fitness and keep active during this time, while following government guidelines about safe distance and safe exercise environments”.

The RFU subsequently announced the end of the 2019/20 rugby season for all league, cup and county rugby in England. The only exception to this is the Gallagher Premiership, who they are in active discussions with to review possible best next steps.

The RFU recognises that

- There are principles around continued physical activity and wellbeing that need to be considered, potentially over a long period, provided the welfare of vulnerable individuals is prioritised.
- There is no clarity yet about when rugby activities will be able to restart.
- In due course there will be a need for players to be able to prepare for a return to competition/match play, whilst reducing the potential for injury.

On the 20th of March the government announced further measure on social distancing <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-announces-further-measures-on-social-distancing> and advised that we must all be adopting social distancing measures in an attempt to further reduce the spread of the Coronavirus and the potential impact on vulnerable individuals.

This updated instruction by government included a host of measures which included:

- The closure of all indoor leisure and sports facilities, including gyms.
- Everyone to stay at home unless they needed to get essential supplies such as food and medicines.

Please note that whilst this advice is accurate as of 25/3/2020, it is likely to change and conditioners, coaches and players need to ensure that they are monitoring Government sites and PHE.



- All those able to work from home to do so, unless their work is essential.
- Only traveling if absolutely necessary - while public transport won't stop, this should only be used for essential travel - for example by key workers to travel to and from work.

A further announcement from the Prime Minister on the evening of the 23rd of March said that people should only leave home for one of four reasons:

- Shopping for basic necessities such as food and medicine. Shopping trips should be as infrequent as possible
- One form of exercise a day such as a run, walk, or cycle. This should be done alone or only with people you live with
- Any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person. This includes moving children under the age of 18 between their parents' homes, where applicable. Key workers or those with children identified as vulnerable can continue to take their children to school
- Travelling to and from work, but only where this is absolutely necessary and cannot be done from home

These four reasons are exceptions and even when following the above guidance, people should minimise the amount of time spent out of their homes and should keep two metres (6ft) away from people they do not live with.

Initial guidance issued by the RFU on March 19th proposed that individual conditioning activities needed to be risk assessed on a case by case basis but could take place simultaneously in a shared space (if the environment risk assessment supported this).

However the updated Government guidance means that whilst it is recognised that clubs and players may wish to continue with individual conditioning programmes and that there will be players with injuries that require ongoing rehabilitation and conditioning by team medical and S&C staff, it is no longer appropriate to deliver individual conditioning programmes in a private or public gym and that any conditioning done once a day, outside the players own home, needed to be consistent with the governments guidance and be done alone or with people that the player lives with. Players should minimise the amount of time spent outside their homes and keep 2 metres away from people that they do not live with. Rehab conditioning driven by an agreed medical need should be considered separately.

Consideration regarding a) the necessity of, b) the specific aims of, and c) where and how best to deliver any conditioning programmes during this period of strict social distancing should be made by clubs and their players on an individual case by case basis minimising any risk to both the individual player and those that they live with. This must be informed by the key principles of social distancing and hygiene, both basic and corona virus specific.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Please note that whilst this advice is accurate as of 25/3/2020, it is likely to change and conditioners, coaches and players need to ensure that they are monitoring Government sites and PHE.



It is recommended that clubs and players now only consider essential conditioning activities that can be undertaken safely by the player at home or in an outdoor environment, which are required for the avoidance of injury and preparation for future competition and adhere to the guidelines below:

- A full risk assessment is undertaken and core hygiene principles are established for home or outdoor environments including:
- Players should minimise the amount of time spent outside their homes and keep 2 metres away from people that they do not live with
- Any equipment used is cleaned by the player before and after use by a player
- The player undertakes routine personal hand hygiene after the use of each piece of equipment
- The player uses their own towels, water bottles, any nutritional supplements and does not share these or food resources/facilities with others

Based on the current UK guidance, the spread of COVID-19 is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres or less) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.

There are 2 main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:

- infection can be spread to people who are nearby (within 2 metres)
- it is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes (such as touching conditioning equipment or shaking hands then touching own face)

Fortunately, normal cleaning methods do kill the coronavirus and cleaning of equipment plays an important role in keeping players safe.

In addition, players should wash their hands for 20 seconds frequently and catch coughs and sneezes in tissues

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