

Hearing Impairments & Wearing Hearing Aids

One of our players needs to wear a hearing aid, can they still play?

Playing rugby union provides a number of benefits, such as improving fitness and wellbeing. While the RFU want the game to be as inclusive as possible, we must also put player welfare first and so have to bear in mind the risk of injury to the player wearing the aid and to other players from contact with the device or broken devices.

Hearing aids are not specifically set out as banned items of equipment. However, they must comply with the requirements of World Rugby World Rugby's [Regulation 12](#) as set out in [Law 4](#). Where possible we recommend that hearing aids are removed prior to playing, or taking part in any contact activity; but we understand that this may not always be practical.



The decision on whether a hearing aid can be worn for rugby activity (including contact) will depend on the specification of the hearing device. For example, a moulded, modern-day version is more likely to comply with the WR [Regulation 12](#) requirements and unlikely to present any issues, particularly if it is inserted into the ear rather than protruding or placed externally around the ear. It may, therefore, be appropriate for a moulded hearing aid to be worn, although we'd suggest a head guard/scrum cap is also worn.

Touch rugby may be an appropriate alternative when contact activity is not suitable and for any individuals with cochlear implants fitted, where contact sports aren't advised due the risk of damaging the device and potentially causing further issues with any remaining hearing.



It is advisable to seek medical advice before participating in any rugby union activity. The player/parent/guardian(s) should speak with their specialist to explain exactly what activities they will be undertaking and follow advice. If under 18 then the player's parents/guardians should be asked by the club or school to confirm in writing that their child has been medically cleared to play. An adult player should also inform their club, with a record being kept.

Where considered appropriate for an individual to participate, good communication between the player, parent/guardian(s), coaches, referees and other key personnel is important so that everyone is clear what (if any) particular accommodations need to be taken to consider safety and ensure that the experience is a positive one for the player and others involved. Coaches may want to consider using different methods and approaches that meet the needs of the individual, for example nominating a player buddy to help a hearing-impaired player respond to coaching instructions or know when a referee has blown the whistle.

RUGBYSAFE ESSENTIAL GUIDE



Further Information

[UK Deaf Sport](#) provides further information on the opportunities in sport for the deaf and individuals with a hearing impairment.

[UK Coaching](#) offer training opportunities and resources to support those involved with coaches, including some useful [tips for coaching disabled people](#).

The [Activity Alliance](#) works to make people with a disability active and engaged in sport.



The [International Mixed Ability Sports](#) organisation promote the development of inclusive activity including mixed ability rugby.

Any advice provided by the RFU in relation to specific injuries, illnesses or disabilities is only general advice and it should not be used as a substitute for the individual advice patients receive when they consult their own doctor. Individuals are advised to consult their own General Practitioner or Hospital Consultant for specific advice on their condition and/or fitness to train for or play rugby.

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Teamwork Respect Enjoyment Discipline Sportsmanship

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