



  
SINGAPORE  
SPORTS COUNCIL

**Sports  
Safety**

# Safe Rugby Guide

**Think Safe. Play Safe. Stay Safe.**

## A Sports Safe Singapore

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) recognises that safety must be a fundamental component of a sporting culture and a prerequisite for every healthy lifestyle. Therefore, SSC has set a corporate goal of zero injuries, in the belief that all accidents are preventable. Emphasising the need for personal accountability, SSC also urges people to be responsible for the safety of others. SSC's first Sports Safety Division was formed in 2006 directly under the purview of the CEO's office. It is tasked to promote safety throughout Singapore's sporting community and to inculcate a safety-first mentality in the minds of every stakeholder. For more information, please visit [www.sportssafety.ssc.gov.sg](http://www.sportssafety.ssc.gov.sg)

## Acknowledgements

The Singapore Sports Council (SSC) would like to thank and acknowledge the organisations and individuals who have participated in the consultation process to produce the first version of the Safe Rugby Guide. We would also like to thank the International Rugby Board (<http://www.irb.com>) for their invaluable contributions. The feedback and suggestions greatly improved the final delivery of this publication.



**Think Safe. Play Safe. Stay Safe.**

*Another initiative by the Sports Safety Division, Singapore Sports Council*

# CONTENTS

Introduction .....	2
Environment and Conditions .....	3
Common Injuries.....	4
Getting Prepared .....	7
Warm Up, Cool Down and Stretch.....	9

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is intended for general information only. SSC, the content contributors and the distributors of this publication will not bear any responsibility for any action taken or any reliance placed as a result of reading any part or all of the information provided in this publication, or for any error, flaw or deficiency in or any omission from the information provided. SSC and its partners in sports safety/health promotion make no warranty of non-infringement, reliability or fitness for any particular purpose, or warranty of any kind, express or implied, in relation to the information provided in this publication. Readers shall use it with discretion, and shall exercise care and diligence for their own and/or their charges' personal safety.

## Copyright

SSC owns the rights to, or is permitted to reproduce, the information and materials provided in this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced or copied for any commercial purposes without the prior written consent of SSC.

# INTRODUCTION

Commonly known as a 'thug's sport' played by gentlemen, rugby is a contact sport involving hard tackles. Despite being known as a tough and rough sport, rugby is a game that many appreciate for the fine skills and teamwork involved.

While not as popular as football, rugby's prominence in Singapore has been rising, with more schools joining in on the action and the formation of more recreational clubs that take part in local rugby fixtures. To say that rugby is an unsafe sport would not be fair to the sport, but we must all know that the risk of injury is very real in such a contact sport.

Some common rugby injuries include bruising, sprains, concussions, joint dislocations and fractures. Considering the nature of the sport, it is critical that players are aware of the steps that can be undertaken to prevent injury.

The next few sections provide some basic safety tips that can help to ensure that you enjoy your game safely.



# ENVIRONMENT AND CONDITIONS

It is important to ensure that players are allowed to enjoy the sport without risk of injury. Issues regarding the playing environment and equipment that need to be checked before training or playing are:



## 1. The Playing Surface

The sport is played on a field and care should be taken to ensure that it is level and sufficiently lit. Remove any exposed sprinkler heads, broken glass, rubbish or stones that may be present on the field.



## 2. Equipment

The equipment should be suited for the age and experience of the players. Ensure that goal posts are adequately padded, scrum machines and tackle / rucking bags are in good condition, corner flags are placed properly and capable of flexing on impact.



## 3. Weather

Check the weather forecast before playing. Extreme weather may lead to heat-related illnesses like heat exhaustion, heat stroke and dehydration. All players should wear clothes appropriate for various weather conditions, e.g. under wet conditions, players should wear waterproof clothing during training as well as before and after matches. Cancel or postpone a sports activity if there are signs of heavy downpour or lightning and seek shelter if you are caught in stormy weather.

# COMMON INJURIES

Due to the highly physical nature of the contact sport, fractures, sprains and other joint injuries are common among rugby players. Most of these injuries can be quite minor but if safety precautions are ignored, serious injuries like fractures and concussions can occur. Never try to play through any form of pain in your body as pain is your body's way of indicating the presence of a possible problem or overexertion. Some of the common rugby injuries include:

## 1. Concussion

This is an injury caused by a blow to the head or body that causes the brain to move rapidly inside the skull and disrupts the way the cells in the brain normally work. Such injuries can impair thinking and cause memory problems.



### Signs of concussion include:

- appearing dazed or stunned
- being confused about assignment or position
- being unsure of the game, score or opponent
- moving clumsily
- answering questions slowly
- losing consciousness (even briefly)
- inability to recall events prior to or after a hit or fall

### Symptoms of concussion include:

- headache or 'pressure' in head
- nausea or vomiting
- balancing problems or dizziness
- double or blurry vision
- confusion
- sensitivity to noise or light
- problems with concentration or memory

**Note:** A player who has suffered a concussion shall not participate in any match or training session for a minimum of three weeks from the time of injury, and may then only do so when symptom-free and declared fit after proper medical examination. Such declaration must be carried out after medical examination of the player.

Except in age grade rugby where the minimum three-week period is mandatory, the three weeks may be shortened only if the player is symptom-free and declared fit to play after appropriate assessment by a properly qualified and recognized neurological specialist. Such declaration must be recorded in a written report prepared by the specialist.

## 2. Joint Dislocations

When a joint experiences a sudden impact, it may be displaced by the impact. In most cases, the ligament connected to the joint would also be damaged.

### Ways to Prevent Joint Dislocations:

- Put on the appropriate safety gear, e.g. an ankle brace
- Ensure readiness by performing strength training exercises to increase the stability and strength of various body parts, paying particular attention to vulnerable parts like the shoulders, ankles and neck



## 3. Soft Tissue Injuries

Soft tissue injuries are the most common injury in sports and includes injuries to the muscles, tendons and ligaments. The damage to muscles, tendons and ligaments in our body is usually caused by contusion (bruising) or the overuse of a particular body part. Minor forms of soft tissue injuries include strains and sprains while major forms include torn ligaments.

### Ways to Prevent Soft Tissue Injuries:

- Warming up, stretching and cooling down
- Undertaking training prior to a competition to ensure match-readiness
- Gradually increasing the intensity and duration of training so that muscles become accustomed to the effort
- Wearing appropriate and well-fitted footwear that provides adequate support and traction
- Allowing adequate recovery time between training, playing or competition sessions to prevent overexertion

## 4. Fractures

It is usually caused by high-impact collisions from tackles or falls. This results in a break in continuity of the bone structure. Bone fractures may or may not be easy to detect, depending on the type and site of fracture. Open fractures occur when the skin above the fracture site appears deformed and these are relatively easier to detect as compared to closed fractures.



## General Tips for Preventing Rugby Injuries

- Develop a conditioning programme weeks before a match to ensure that the body is accustomed to the sport
- Ensure that the players are aware of the proper techniques for the sport, i.e. the right way to tackle an opponent or the right way to break a fall
- Ensure that adequate and appropriate gear are worn during the game
- Warm up, stretch and cool down before and after playing
- Take frequent short breaks during practice and games





# GETTING PREPARED

## Essential Rugby Gear

Players can prepare themselves by making sure that they use the appropriate protective gear during the sport.

### 1. Mouth Guards

Mouth guards are recommended for players during matches and training sessions. A functional mouth guard should protect the player's teeth and its surrounding soft tissue, as well as prevent a broken jaw. Those made from a dental mould usually provide the best protection. To be on the safe side, ensure that mouth guards are replaced every season.



### 2. Footwear

Footwear for the players should be in good condition and appropriate for the playing surface. Cleats / studs should be suited for the conditions. Ensure that screw-on cleats and studs are tightened and boots are fastened securely before playing.



### 3. Scrum Caps and Head Guards

To prevent soft tissue injuries to the head and ears, properly fitted headgear should be worn. This can reduce the risk of developing 'Cauliflower Ears', where the casualty's ears appear permanently deformed and fluid collects, forming a hematoma. Wearing a scrum cap keeps the player's ears flat against his / her head to prevent injuries.





#### 4. Padded Gear

Padded gear can reduce the incidence of minor injuries like contusions, cuts and abrasions. However, it is important to note that padded gear do not protect against major injuries and should not be used as a means of allowing injured players to return to play prior to total recovery.



#### 5. Thick Socks

It is of paramount importance that rugby players wear socks that are thick enough to minimise the risk of developing blisters. Once a blister has formed, however, it is advisable to apply moleskin to it to reduce the amount of pressure on the protruding blister.

### Stay Hydrated

Water is essential to normal body function. During exercise, the major source of water loss from the body is perspiration. To avoid a significant decrease in performance, this water lost must be replaced, both during matches and training.

During a game of rugby, keeping hydrated is more important than supplying fuel to the muscles. Drink before, during and after exercise. You should drink about 500ml of water half an hour before and 250 - 500ml of water every half hour during sports. Do not wait until you are thirsty before drinking. By then, you would be too dehydrated to perform at your best.

#### Signs and symptoms of dehydration:

- Fatigue
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea and vomiting
- Rapid pulse
- Dizziness
- Decreased urination



# WARM UP, COOL DOWN AND STRETCH

The warm up is often part of the start of a physical activity session. The warm up aims to:

- Prepare the mind and body for the activity
- Increase body temperature
- Increase heart rate
- Increase breathing rate

The warm up routine should include activities that use the same movement patterns as the activities to be performed during the session. Warm up exercises should begin at a low intensity and gradually increased to the level required for the activity. Warm up exercises help participants to mentally and physically prepare themselves for the sport while cool down exercises assist in recovery.

Participants should include a cool down routine at the end of every activity session, consisting of:

- Activity of significantly reduced intensity, such as 2-3 minutes of easy jogging or walking
- 5 minutes of gentle, dynamic stretching exercises

Stretching activities should move the muscles through a full range of movements and include all muscle groups involved in the main activity. Stretching can be performed in different ways but there is evidence for youths that dynamic stretching (moving slowly through a full stretch) is better than static stretching (holding one angle for more than a few seconds).





Partners in Sports



---

Giving Hope. Improving Lives.