

# National Rugby League Policy



## RETURN TO PLAY

At times, a variety of injuries/illness occurs while playing contact sports. It is inevitable that injuries and illness will occur during a player/s career whether it is through professional or social events.

Rugby League is a contact sport. The NRL Accredited Sports Trainer Code of Practice recognises that injuries occur on a variety of levels from minor muscular related, sprains, strains to fractures to more serious injuries such as head and spinal injuries and on some very rare occasions, death.

The cause of these injuries and conditions can range from a social nature to a physiological nature such as age and weight to a physical nature such as decreased physical condition, pre-existing conditions and injuries to name a few.

The aim of this Code of Practice is to give Sports Trainers at a club level, the tools that they need to assess an injured player/s and to recognise if it is safe to allow a player/s to return to the field of play or to instruct the player/s coach, other on field staff and parents of the player/s ability or inability to return to the field of play.

Injuries that are not managed appropriately can cause the player/s further pain and discomfort. On the other hand, if a player/s has returned to the field of play too early without proper injury management and advice, this can lead to a serious injury or worse.

As a Sports Trainer, it is expected that you operate in accordance with your qualification and if in doubt, seek further assistance from higher qualified officers such as Level 2 Sports Trainers, relevant ambulance services (call them to the field to assess the player/s) or doctors who are present at the game.

### **NEVER ALLOW A PLAYER/S TO RETURN TO THE FIELD OF PLAY IF YOU HAVE ANY DOUBT OF FURTHER INJURY.**

Remember that all relevant injury paperwork needs to be completed for all players who are assisted from the field by a Sports Trainer and are managed by a Sports Trainer.

Once a decision has been made for a player/s not to return to the field of play, the player/s will not return to training or play any further games until medical clearance is made by a doctor and paperwork has been filed with the Club's Co-ordinator.

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Conditions where a medical clearance is required

- » Any form of cardiac (heart condition)
- » Hypertension (history of high blood pressure)
- » Broken bones of any sort (other than fingers)
- » Significant soft tissue injuries (where a player has not recovered to a playing capacity one week post insult)
- » Any form of concussion
- » Any form of unconsciousness, no matter how brief
- » Any form of potential cervical (neck) injury
- » Repeated episodes of illness of already diagnosed medical conditions such as
  - » Asthma, diabetes and epilepsy
  - » Any injury involving the eye itself
  - » Any player recovering from a significant illness, such as:
    - Chicken Pox
    - Measles
    - Whooping cough
    - Glandular fever
    - Swine flu (H1/N1)
    - Pneumonia
    - Any form of influenza where it has caused the player to miss games and training greater than one week
    - Any immune depressed conditions as deemed necessary by accredited Sports Trainers

The above points are not completely exhaustive, however it is expected that a common sense approach is applied by Sports Trainers when requesting a medical clearance. Many of the mentioned conditions can be exacerbated (made worse) by physical activity and cause the player/s further illness or discomfort. Some medical conditions can also be contagious and pose a risk to other players and coaching staff. Player welfare is the number one priority of the Rugby League Sports Trainers' Accreditation Scheme. The reason for medical clearances is not all about liability. It is ensuring that players seek medical attention for conditions that may cause them further serious health problems in the long term.

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Some injuries during a game and training resolve, such as where a player gets “tagged”, receives grazes / abrasions and some superficial lacerations, many of which can be managed quite promptly by the accredited Sports Trainer.

Some soft tissue and joint injuries can be managed quite appropriately by strapping with no further complications arising. With any injury in which ICE has been applied, it is imperative that the joint/muscle is adequately re-warmed to the players’ original pre injury conditions and that there is no impairment to the players’ range of movement and/or sensation. The accredited Sports Trainer can cause any exercise, fitness test or stretching task to be completed by any player/s before they are allowed to return to the field of play.

The return to play will be at the discretion of the accredited Sports Trainer as noted in numerous National Rugby League documentation i.e. the On Field Policy.

## **THE ACCREDITED NATIONAL RUGBY LEAGUE SPORTS TRAINER WILL HAVE THE LAST SAY IN PLAYER WELFARE.**

It is expected that the accredited Sports Trainer will work closely with the coaching staff to ensure that player welfare is and will always remain paramount in the game of Rugby League.