



SUOMEN RUGBYLIITTO

FINNISH RUGBY FEDERATION

PREPARATION FOR COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ON SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Introduction

Finland has seen a rise of COVID-19 infections in the past three weeks, and many of the regions are already back in the acceleration or transmission phase. With this rise on infections, and the situation being very different to last year, it has become essential that our instructions are updated.

As more than a third of the Finnish population have already been vaccinated twice, it is less likely for harder restrictions to be made as swiftly as last year. However, it is wise and necessary for us to prepare our competitions and clubs in case restrictions are once again put to place.

Naturally, these instructions will be continually adapted depending on the rules and regulations issued by the Finnish Government and by local authorities and input from World Rugby and Rugby Europe, the SRL (Suomen rugbyliitto ry) based on this provided information.

These instructions are based on guidelines made by THL (Finnish institute for health and welfare) and Finnish Government that are in place as of the 2nd of August 2021.

The goal of these instructions is not to cancel all chances of exposure to COVID-19, but to reduce the amount and probability of actual infections.

These instructions apply for all players, and it will be in place until the Government of Finland has lifted the COVID-19 restrictions or the SRL board decides these instructions are no longer valid.

For more detailed info on COVID-19 situation and/or instructions go to: www.thl.fi and <https://valtioneuvosto.fi/tietoa-koronaviruksesta/rajoitukset-ja-suositukset>.



Risk Evaluation, Triage, and Hygiene

Throughout the phases, the following rules always remain in place:

- 1. Face Mask:** Players and everybody involved must wear a face mask when indoors and there are more than one person present. A face mask should also be worn outside when it is not possible to maintain a two (2) meter safety distance when coming or leaving training or a match. Face masks are not recommended to be used during practice or game. The SRL board recommends the use of a surgical mask or an FFP-2 mask to be worn anytime a mask is necessary. The instructions for the correct use of a face mask can be found through this link: <https://thl.fi/en/web/infectious-diseases-and-vaccinations/what-s-new/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-updates/transmission-and-protection-coronavirus/recommendation-on-the-use-of-face-masks-for-citizens>
NOTE: Face masks are not mandatory for those who have a health condition which prevents the mask from being used. The recommendation for face masks will only be lifted when the government does so.
- 2. Safety Distance:** Whenever possible, even right before and right after the game, everyone involved should keep a safety distance of two (2) or more meters. Before, during and after practice or game players should avoid unnecessary contact to anybody involved. This includes handshakes after the game. **NOTE:** training contact is necessary for the preparation of the game and is only not recommended during the transmission phase unless stated otherwise by the local health officers.
- 3. Hygiene:** Players must wash or sanitize hands before and after each training or competition session, avoid touching their faces, especially nose, eyes and mouth, and cough or sneeze into their elbow. Each player must bring their own water bottle, labelled with their name. They are encouraged to strictly follow the confederation hygiene rules and respect health, prevention, and general recommendations.
- 4. Self-Assessment:** before going to their training or competition session, each player must complete a daily health self-assessment: Do I have one of the following symptoms: symptoms of acute respiratory disease (including any flu-like symptoms as we as cough,



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sore throat, shortness of breath) OR elevated body temperature OR sudden loss of smell or taste. If YES: do not go to training/competition and follow the advice of your local health authorities. Each player must inform their coach if the answer to the question above is YES. Each club has the responsibility to ensure this information is provided by their players and that the rest of the group is informed if a player has such symptoms. If you are not sure about your symptoms, you can use www.omaolo.fi to help determine whether you need to get a test or not.

Any participant may not go to training if he/she has any of the symptoms above or if he/she or anyone in their household has been diagnosed with COVID-19. In a situation when any participant knows to be exposed to a verified infection, he/she needs to contact his/her local health provider for further instructions. Any participant should get tested according to the guidelines set by local health authorities/THL and cannot participate until they are fully healthy/cleared by a health official. Anyone who has been instructed or recommended to stay in quarantine cannot participate in trainings or game activities until the quarantine is over and the possible symptoms have passed.

5. **Tracking Presences:** at each training/competition session, the club must keep track of the first name, last name, e-mail address, and phone number of each person present at the training session.
6. **Player Safety:** as is always the case in the sport of rugby, player safety must remain at the centre of each activity, be it in training or in competition. This rule takes on an extra-special importance in the current time, as injury prevention not only serves to keep players healthy, but also to avoid overburdening our emergency health care system.

Transportation to and from Training

Most rugby players in Finland train and play in or near the city where they live. They are encouraged to go to training by bicycle. Those who live further, are encouraged, in the current situation, to use private transportation, to avoid overcrowding public transport. Those who must use public transport, should try to avoid peak hours to avoid overcrowding. If needed, training hours and duration will be adapted where possible.





Infrastructure

Rugby in Finland is practiced on grass fields and artificial turf. Usually they are soccer football pitches, which belong to the local municipality. The municipality is normally in charge of the management, maintenance, and cleaning of the structures. All rugby clubs are obligated to cooperate closely with their local Sports Authorities and municipalities regarding the re-opening and use of the sports facilities, as well as regarding observing all hygiene rules put in place by the local sports authority and city for the specific infrastructure they are using.

In case of a lockdown, the return to play is as follows: It is presumed that regions, which are in the transmission phase, might have their dressing rooms, showers, normally provided by the sports facilities closed. Players are recommended to come to training already in their training outfits, to bring a change of clothes, and to shower after training back at their homes. In addition, they are expected to bring any nutrition and beverages with them and keep them separated and always well-marked with their name. Participants should follow the local guidelines if they are planning to arrange any private gatherings. If possible: dispensing points for hydro-alcoholic gel and disposable paper with waste bins are to be put in place.

Organisation of Training and Competitions

Premise:

The rules and constraints are currently regionalized according to their respective infection status. The statuses are: 1) baseline/stable level, 2) acceleration phase, 3) transmission phase.

Group hobbies for adults

Epidemic at a stable level

- Arrangements ensure good hygiene and guidelines for customers.
- Participants and parties are kept sufficiently far apart.

Acceleration phase of the epidemic

- Participants must avoid close contact with others when there are more than 10 people indoors and more than 50 people in enclosed outdoors spaces.



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Community transmission phase of the epidemic

- Participants must avoid close contact with others.
- The use of outdoor and indoor spaces for group hobbies may be suspended. This applies to spaces with high risk of infection.

- Source (2nd Aug 2021):

<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/en/information-on-coronavirus/current-restrictions>

The SRL board will follow the instructions given by the government closely and update the instructions when needed. The clubs are instructed to follow their regional instructions and guidelines. The competitions will follow any guidelines given from local and national health officials, and they will be communicated through to the clubs and other stakeholders on SRL's platforms.

In case of a total lockdown, the competitions will be either postponed or cancelled by the decision of the SRL's board. Any regional lockdown will be handled case by case as they come.