

Blood Policy Guidelines

These guidelines are recommended for use both during training and games.

Blood borne Infections and Contact Sports

The potential for the spread of infection in contact and collision sports such as rugby union, has been widely recognised for many years. As a consequence of heightened public awareness and anxieties, increasing attention has been given in recent years to the possible risks of acquiring hepatitis B (HBV) or HIV infection in sports where the spillage of blood may occur.

The risk of acquiring HIV or hepatitis B through playing rugby is minimal.

Players

- It is the responsibility of all players to maintain strict personal hygiene by covering any cuts or abrasions with an impermeable waterproof dressing.
- Open cuts and abrasions occurring during a match or training must be reported and treated immediately
- Players should avoid unnecessary contact with the blood of other players
- All blood soaked jerseys, shorts etc, should where possible be removed and replaced by fresh clean clothing as soon as possible. Blood contaminated clothing should be put through a hot detergent wash
- All players with a recent history of evidence of infectious disease should discuss the potential hazards of participation in sport with a doctor. Chronic carriers of blood borne diseases should also seek medical clearance and advice. They may not be excluded from participating in contact sports
- Players and officials should be strongly encouraged to obtain immunisation against hepatitis B infection

Referees, Match Officials and Team Attendants

- Under Law 3 (6) (a), a player who has an open or bleeding wound (including nose bleeds) must leave the playing area until the bleeding is controlled and the wound is covered or dressed
- When bleeding cannot be controlled, the player must not be permitted to return to the game.
- Clothing and equipment contaminated with fresh blood should be replaced prior to the player returning to the field of play
- Persons attending to bleeding players shall wear disposable gloves. Disposable mouth-to-mouth resuscitation devices should also be available.

Team Preparation Areas

It is the responsibility of all clubs to ensure that dressing rooms, warm up areas etc, be kept clean and tidy. Particular attention should be paid to hand basins, toilets and showers. Adequate soap, paper hand towels and disinfectants should always be available. Household bleach (diluted 1 part in 10) should be used to clean up blood spills.

Key Points

- Bleeding players must be removed immediately from the field of play (during games and training) until the bleeding is controlled and the wound covered with an impermeable waterproof dressing.
- Individual disposable wipes should always be used in preference to the communal sponge
- Blood soaked equipment (jerseys, shorts etc) should be replaced by fresh clean equipment, and put through a hot detergent wash
- First aid kits should include disposable gloves
- Players with a recent history or who are known carriers of infectious disease should discuss the potential hazards of participation in contact sport with a doctor
- Showering is preferable to the communal shower
- Personal and environmental hygiene should be maintained at a high level at all times.