

Playing Rugby with Asthma

Asthma is often seen as a reason not to exercise or play sports. Yet for most people with asthma, particularly children, exercise and sport are good for their condition. Rugby union can play a positive part in getting people involved in activity and leading a healthier lifestyle. However, it is important to ensure that the asthma is well controlled and that players, coaches etc. have a clear understanding of any limitations, what to do if symptoms occur and in the event of an asthma attack.

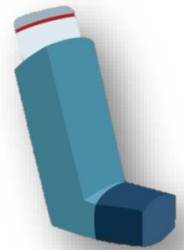
Coaches are sometimes worried about working with players (especially children) with asthma as they are concerned about its effects, the use of medicines and the risk of an attack. In most cases this is completely manageable and awareness of some simple considerations will allow players to participate as much as they are able.



The main worry for players with asthma is the effect of cold air which can cause the muscles around the airways to tighten and make breathing more difficult. To minimise the effect of cold air ensure that everyone is appropriately warmed up and, if necessary, that individuals have taken their inhaler beforehand.

Tips to manage asthma while playing rugby

- Coaches should make sure they know which players have asthma.
- Always start sessions with progressive warm up exercises.
- Try to avoid the things that trigger asthma (e.g. smoke, pollen).
- Ensure that players always have their reliever blue reliever inhaler with them.
- If a child has asthma symptoms when they are playing, ensure that they stop, use their reliever (preferably with a spacer if they have one) and wait five minutes or until they feel better before starting again. An adult player should monitor their own symptoms and be aware of whether they need to leave the pitch.
- If a player has to sit out, try to involve them as much as possible, for example by getting them to take notes on the match or training, or getting them to do some simple rugby activities such as passing (if they feel well enough).
- Always end sessions with warm down exercises.
- If a player is having any problems during a rugby session always let their parents know, as they may need to visit their doctor or asthma nurse for an asthma review.
- Players should ideally have a written action plan. This is especially important while playing rugby and is a reminder for the player and those around them about what to do if they are experiencing severe asthma symptoms.





Before participating in any rugby union activity, a player with asthma should book an asthma review with their GP or asthma nurse to check their asthma is well controlled and that they're not using their blue inhaler more than twice a week. Clubs/schools should keep a record of any players with asthma, with coaches, team managers etc. checking before every session that the player has access to their inhaler.

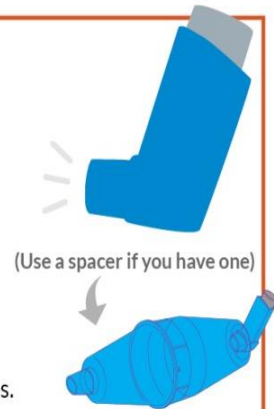
Where deemed appropriate to participate, communication between the player, parent/guardian(s), coaches and first aiders is important so that everyone is clear what (if any) particular precautions need to be taken to keep the individual safe during rugby games or training.

What to do if someone has an asthma attack

Asthma UK provides the following guidance for when a child is having an asthma attack:

What to do if a child is having an asthma attack

- 1 Help them sit up straight and keep calm.
- 2 Help them take one puff of their reliever inhaler (usually blue) every 30-60 seconds, up to a maximum of 10 puffs.
- 3 **Call 999 for an ambulance if:**
 - their symptoms get worse while they're using their inhaler – this could be a cough, breathlessness, wheeze, tight chest or sometimes a child will say they have a 'tummy ache'
 - they don't feel better after 10 puffs
 - you're worried at any time.
- 4 You can repeat step 2 if the ambulance is taking longer than 15 minutes.



IMPORTANT! This asthma attack information is not designed for children using a SMART or MART regime. If they do not have a reliever inhaler, call an ambulance. Then speak to their GP or asthma nurse to get the correct asthma attack information for the future.

Asthma UK provides the following guidance for when an adult is having an asthma attack:

What to do in an asthma attack

- 1 Sit up – don't lie down. Try to keep calm.
- 2 Take one puff of your reliever inhaler (usually blue) every 30-60 seconds, up to a maximum of 10 puffs.
- 3 If you feel worse at any point while you're using your inhaler OR you don't feel better after 10 puffs OR you're worried at any time, call 999 for an ambulance.
- 4 If the ambulance is taking longer than 15 minutes you can repeat step 2.

IMPORTANT! This asthma attack information is not designed for people using a SMART or MART medicine plan. Speak to your GP or asthma nurse to get the correct asthma attack information for them.



RUGBYSAFE ESSENTIAL GUIDE



Further Information



Further information and the latest advice about asthma is available at [Asthma UK](#).

Asthma UK also has a dedicated help line with a team of expert asthma nurses available to speak to confidentially on 0300 222 5800. Opening times Mon-Fri 9am-5pm. ([Asthma UK Helpline](#))



The NHS provides comprehensive health information and guidance. Call 111 for non-emergency medical advice or visit the [NHS website](#).

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.