

## Down's Syndrome

### Can someone with Down's Syndrome play rugby?

The way that Down's Syndrome can affect individuals varies a great deal and participation in physical activity can have differing effects. For an individual with Down's Syndrome and spinal involvement, we would recommend that they don't participate in contact sport as the risk of injury is significantly increased. Touch rugby, on the advice of their specialist, may be a more viable option. However, for others contact rugby may be acceptable, with exercise and participation in rugby providing many benefits, such as improving fitness and wellbeing.



Before participating in any rugby union activity an individual with Down's Syndrome should seek medical advice, particularly in relation to the risk of concussion. Due to the variation in Down's Syndrome, advice may be required on one or more aspects of the condition and the side effects it may present. The decision on whether an individual can play rugby, and in what format, needs to be on the basis of medical advice by an appropriate expert. If under 18 the player's parents/guardians should be asked by the club or school to confirm in writing that their child has been medically cleared to play. An adult player should also inform their club, with a record of the decision being kept.

Where considered appropriate for an individual to participate, good communication between the player, parent/guardian(s), coaches, referees and other key personnel is important so that everyone is clear what (if any) particular safety accommodations are taken and to ensure that the experience is a positive one for the player and others involved. Coaches should consider using different methods and approaches that meet the needs of the individual and the group of players they are working with.

### Further Information

For further information on Down's Syndrome please visit the [Down's Syndrome Association](#).

[UK Coaching](#) offer training opportunities and resources to support those involved with coaches, including some useful [tips for coaching disabled people](#).

The [Activity Alliance](#) works to make people with a disability active and engaged in sport.



The [International Mixed Ability Sports](#) organisation promote the development of inclusive activity including mixed ability rugby.

*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.*

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Teamwork Respect Enjoyment Discipline Sportsmanship