



THE WALKING
FOOTBALL
ASSOCIATION

Covid-19

Return to play guidelines

Our latest guidance on returning to play walking football. Created in consultation with clubs and incorporating the latest Government advice.

Version 5 - Mar 2021

Introduction

In preparation of these guidelines we have taken into consideration the age of WFA players.

On Monday 29 March, as part of the next stage of the Government's roadmap out of national lockdown, outdoor sports facilities can open, and organised outdoor walking football can take place once again.

Please follow the government safer travel guidance.

Changing rooms- If these are open- team talks/ briefings and other gatherings should not take place in changing rooms under any circumstances.

Spectators - No One should leave home to participate in sport or to be a spectator if they, or someone they live with, have symptoms of COVID-19 currently recognised as any of the following:

- A high Temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste

Supporters and spectators must adhere to legal gathering limits. If persons do not follow the legal requirements they should be asked to leave or not attend again.

We recommend that no spectators should attend.

Match Officials, medics and coaches should observe the government and WFA guidance in the same way as participants and must remain socially distanced from players where possible during play, i.e on touch line and / or behind boards.

Elite Athlete (I.e.WFA England representative)
For the purposes of this guidance the definition of an 'elite athlete' means a person who is:

- a senior representative nominated by a relevant sporting body
- a member of the senior training squad for a relevant sporting body, or

Vaccination

Many of you will also now be vaccinated, but remember the vaccine doesn't mean you can't catch or pass on the virus. A full two injection course will only lessen the impact of the virus and should stop you becoming seriously ill.

Note: Covid 10 Vaccines.

The WFA do not require that any form of proof of vaccination is necessary before players are allowed to play.

March 29th 2021

Indoor walking football remains closed.

Social distancing will continue to be the expectation at all other times aside from playing.

The COVID-19 officer(s) for each Club/Team should conduct a risk assessment (review existing) and form a risk mitigation strategy prior to the resumption of training. Specific risk considerations include:

Sports facilities and environment

Maximum numbers must not exceed 30 with no overcrowding the pitch i.e. if the pitch size is for 5 a side then no more than 5 a side should be allowed in order to reduce the risk of close contact exposure.

Try to ensure that the time spent by two or more individuals within a 2-metre distance of one another, and level of face to face contact, is kept to a reasonable minimum, consistent with effective playing i.e. no man to man marking, and no overcrowding pitch areas such as corners, free kicks with players in a wall in the last third of the pitch.

Coaching Practices I.e. Elite players

Close contact during technical coaching and physical coaching may take place with precautions such as hygiene practices (e.g. hand washing) and the use of any reasonable PPE relevant to the interaction(s) (e.g. disposable gloves, masks).

Elite (ALL England Squads)

Continuation of training and competition under WFA Return to play conditions and within government guidance.

Non-Elite (clubs, regional squads)

Outdoor only, organised WF Club sessions permitted max 30 per session no spectators and under Return to Play conditions and within government guidance.

These guidelines will remain in place until the UK Government issue new guidance.

General guidance

Restricting the number of participants, is to stop crowding of players on the pitch and off the pitch

Off the pitch - The facilitator needs to 'manage' high numbers attending especially in maintaining social distance rules, pre, during and after the session.

Clubs decide to rotate teams i.e. 4 teams on the pitch and one team waiting (playing 15 min games), maintaining social distancing when not playing.

On the pitch - The size of pitch is crucial to the amount of players who can safely play, if clubs do not have a suitable and sufficient risk assessment in place.

Good controls need to be in place to prevent the risk of transmission during playing i.e. no walls, no corners to reduce overcrowding, no close proximity rule during play i.e. no man to man marking.

1. Await Government clearance for sport gatherings to resume for inside venues
2. Anyone who has a temperature or other Covid-19 symptoms must not attend and if they do, must be sent home immediately
3. Consider the appointment of a club official to be responsible for all Health & Safety, to include compliance with these guidelines
4. Most Walking Football clubs do not own their own facility. Therefore, it's the responsibility of the individual provider to ensure the facility meets the necessary Government legislation and guidance
5. Social distancing is essential before and after playing – players should not put their bags and drinks all in one place.
6. Footballs and, where needed, ground cones should be regularly sanitized and handling of such equipment should be kept to a minimum.
7. Limit the size of spectator groups based on the Governments latest guidance
8. Activities should be in groups of no more than 30 (including organiser and referee)
9. Clubs / organisers should carry out a risk assessment before resuming sessions
10. High Risk Groups: There is an Increased risk to individuals with underlying medical conditions (Government declared high /moderate risk groups and those from BAME groups (black, Asian, and minority ethnic).
11. It is advised that you should identify whether you or a member of your household is at higher risk. If you are, please discuss the risk of returning to play with your household member and your GP to make an informed decision as to whether returning to play is appropriate and safe for you and your family.
12. Insurance: Clubs are advised to Liaise directly with their insurers and insurance advisers to ensure that they are adequately insured and to ascertain whether any additional steps are required. 'RTP should not take place until the insurance position is clear (3) and Insurance cover should include volunteers. Note: Having insurance cover in place does not in itself discharge duties of care: Clubs will still need to take reasonable steps to discharge their duty and protect the health and safety of participants. The provision of cover by insurers is likely to be conditional on these steps being taken.
13. Data Protection: personal information may be collected, ensuring the health and well being of all Participants all applicable data protection laws apply.
14. Risk Assessment: A good risk assessment does not eradicate the risk of liability but if it's reasonable, in line with relevant guidance, and delivered properly then it will reduce those risks significantly.
15. Safety Briefing: Facilitator to provide a safety briefing to remind participants of Covid 19 safety protocols before commencement of play.
16. Indoor Football : When the government allows indoor football to resume, clubs must review and update their Covid 19 risk assessment and communicate all identified controls and requirements to all players. Note: Disability football is exempt and can take place indoors from the 29th March 2021.
17. Anyone is deemed vulnerable in respect of Covid-19 is reminded to follow the Government's specific guidance, only returning to football when it's right for them to do so. There is no pressure to return. Everyone's health, wellbeing and safety are the priorities.
18. Travelling to Sessions: Participants must follow the Governments guidance on safer travel.

Pre-session guidance

- 1.** Limit players per session. May need to use a booking system and add more sessions.
- 2.** A register needs to be taken for each session for 'track and trace' purposes and players need to declare that they are fit and healthy to take part in the session
- 3.** Players should be encouraged to download and use the NHS Test & Trace app and the facility should download and display a Test & Trace QR Code poster
- 4.** Should anyone show symptoms after a session they must follow current Government guidelines and self isolate and contact the NHS Track and Trace immediately to inform them of the session they attended and who kept the register.
- 5.** Leave adequate time between sessions to avoid mixing of participants
- 6.** If possible, consider testing staff, players & refs - evidence of recent test to be provided.
- 7.** Consider testing temperatures with infrared forehead thermometer every session on entrance (cost is approx. £50)
- 8.** Hand sanitisers to be available
- 9.** Consider separate sessions by age, so over 70s are isolated
- 10.** Players to come already changed - Changing rooms **MUST NOT** be used
- 11.** It is recommended to arrive at the WF session in adequate amount of time to perform your duties and to warm up.
- 12.** Balls to be disinfected prior to each session
- 13.** Have players sign a new medical waiver form - no liability and accept terms
- 14.** Consider wearing of protective scarf, bandana or mask
- 15.** Consider advance payment by card or contact payment system to eliminate cash handling
- 16.** Players should sanitise hands before and after playing – gloves are still recommended

During play guidance

1. Apply social distancing during warm-ups as far as possible
2. Ensure game is played strictly as NON-CONTACT
3. No handshakes or hugs or physical goal celebrations
4. Anyone considered to be continuing to cough or splutter asked to leave
5. No sharing of drinks, whistles or pens or anything that could potentially infect others
6. Wear own kit and retain the bib throughout the session. Consider allocating personal bibs
7. All goalkeepers to wear gloves - these must be washed after each session
8. Dedicated first-aiders must wear protective gloves and masks when treating injuries. The first aider should consider whether it is appropriate to give the players a face mask while treatment or close contact is being carried out.
9. All sessions to be refereed by a non-playing referee
10. Consider using 3 touch rule to control close activity. Referees / organiser will have to stop the game if they feel that social distancing or inadequate hygiene regulations are being used.
11. Reduce vociferous interactions during play (shouting as opposed to talking increases the risk of viral infection). Players may use face coverings but should consider that this could restrict breathing
12. No spitting
13. Adapt player groupings as far as possible to keep discreet groups and lower numbers e.g. 5-a-side as opposed to 7-a-side
14. Players need to show self-discipline and respect to other players who might still have concerns about contact – for now, all Walking Football will be within clubs and therefore non-competitive
15. Attacking Free Kicks Consider not allowing defensive walls (social distancing).
16. Corners - Consider no corners to prevent overcrowding last third of pitch.

Post session guidance

1. No social drinks etc after or before sessions
2. All bibs to be washed after each session
3. As far as possible members to be asked to install Govt smart app when available
4. Players should wash their own kit
5. Players to contact NHS Track & Trace post- match if they develop symptoms

Fun, Friendship and Fitness