

COVID-19

Alert Level 3: What does it mean for rugby?
21 April 2020



Key points

- On Tuesday 28 April our country will shift from COVID-19 Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 3.
- Nothing changes in terms of how you train – continue to train alone or in your bubble.
- Please stay at home and stay in your bubble, so we can return to rugby as soon as possible.

What does Alert Level 3 mean for rugby?

- **Same, same but only slightly different:** Things are much the same as they were under Level 4 with a few additional freedoms like being able to buy things online and some additional recreational activities (more on that below).
- **Stay at home** other than for essential movement like going to the supermarket, pharmacy or to seek urgent medical treatment (but call ahead first). **Stay local.**
- Everyone, including our office-based people must continue to **work from home.**
- **Stay in your existing bubble.** You can extend your bubble a little bit to include close family or caregivers only. Keep the number of close contacts you are having to an absolute minimum. This is critical.
- **Continue to train alone or in your existing bubbles.** Stay 2m away from those who are not in your bubble. Gyms are still closed, including your team base. Stay local. Avoid training at the same time and place as your mates from another bubble. Remember people are always watching what we do and so is the media.
- **Other recreational activities:** You can now swim in the open water and surf as long as it is safe to do so. You can fish from a wharf or the shore. You can't do any motorised activity like boating or jet skiing. The most important principle here is to stay local and stay safe. Don't do anything that may require the help of emergency services.
- **Golf:** The good news is you can play golf at Level 3 but **you must do this alone or within your existing bubble.** The same principles that we shared about training apply here: Stay 2m away from others who are not in your bubble. **Don't play at the same time as your mates from another bubble.** Please do the right thing.

- **Avoid sharing equipment** with anyone outside your bubble - remember that the virus can be transferred when we touch different things or surfaces. So keep your hands to yourself!
- **Non-emergency medical treatment should not be face-to-face:** Medical consultations and physiotherapy sessions should still be done via telehealth in the first instance (i.e. by video conferencing or phone) unless it is an emergency (in which case you should still call ahead).
- **If you're sick, get tested.** If you have any symptoms of COVID-19 like fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, head cold, loss of sense of smell or even the slightest sniffle, get tested, and do it quickly. Contact your Team Doctor or GP, or call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for further instructions on where to get tested. You must let your Team Doctor know you are going to get tested.
- **Do NOT join up with other bubbles that include other players.** This is because:
 - If you read the Government's guidelines, it's very clear that extending your bubble is specifically for close family members or caregivers only.
 - From a training and performance perspective the benefits of being able to train as a small bubble are minimal.
 - We need to strictly adhere to the guidelines. Team sport and group training are **NOT** allowed under Level 3.
 - The only gatherings allowable under Alert Level 3 are for significant life events (up to 10 people can attend weddings, funerals and tangihanga).
 - Under the current Alert Levels, rugby can only be played at Level 1. NZ Rugby will be getting clarification from the authorities on what Alert Level 2 means for contact sport but **we need your help to show that we can be trusted to do the right thing at Alert Level 3.** We cannot emphasise enough how important this is.
- **Keep it clean:** Stay vigilant with the usual hygiene measures like hand washing, cough etiquette, and cleaning surfaces.
- **Takeaway food:** We ask you to avoid takeaways. Think of it this way: every contact you have adds more risk of getting the virus and passing it on to others in your bubble so just avoid the risk and continue with your home cooking.

When can we expect to return to playing full contact rugby?

- At this stage we can play all levels of domestic rugby at COVID-19 Alert Level 1.

- NZ Rugby and Sport NZ are seeking clarification on whether contact sport will be possible under Level 2. Any return to play outside of Alert Level 1 will be with the Government's approval.
- We are not likely to be playing any rugby before the middle of June.
- Our coaches and trainers are working up programmes based on June as the earliest return to professional rugby option.
- Prior to any start date there will be a three week preparation window to ensure that you are all conditioned to safely return to full contact rugby.
- The focus is on starting with a domestic competition option given border restrictions are likely to be in place for some time.
- We are currently working through a number of options but will ideally lead with Super Rugby. Mitre 10 and Farah Palmer Cup will follow should circumstances allow.
- International fixtures, including Sevens, are being worked on but return to play dates are uncertain at this stage given border restrictions.
- It is likely that for the foreseeable future, any matches will be played without crowds and with a number of strict health and safety protocols in place. This will include strict cleaning and hygiene measures, contact tracing, testing and self-isolation/quarantine measures.

What is NZ Rugby asking of its people (staff and players)?

- It's not easy, but for the most part, everyone has done a great job so far of doing the right thing and adhering to the rules and requirements under Alert Level 4.
- We're going to be asking more of our players and their families in the coming months than perhaps even Government alert levels are asking, in order to give ourselves the best chance of running a competition and keeping everyone involved in it safe.
- This means we will need to do all the things we outlined earlier under Alert Level 3.
- Everyone will have a role to play in shaping our future - from our staff, to our players, coaches, mental skills people, S&C coaches, PDMs, medical teams – because **this is all about motivation and discipline to stay the course. We all have a responsibility to do the right thing, now more than ever.**
- Think of it like this: "Training is like fighting with a Gorilla. You don't stop when you're tired. You stop when the Gorilla is tired." COVID-19 and our current situation is the Gorilla. Collectively, we need to dig in.

How can we help you get through this?

- Your mental fitness during this time is about as important as your physical fitness, and it requires work to keep your mind healthy and resilient. To support your mental wellbeing try to work on the key pillars which are:
 - **Physical** – get regular exercise, maintain consistent sleep patterns, be aware of alcohol intake and the types of food you are eating
 - **Intellectual** – keep learning e.g. short online courses, musical instruments, languages, read books and listen to podcasts
 - **Emotional** – do things that bring you joy, talk to people you trust about how you are feeling, practice mindfulness, schedule time out, write down what you are grateful for every day
 - **Social** – maintain connections with friends and family, connect with someone you haven't spoken to for a while but keep it virtual
 - **Spiritual** – where possible and safe, maintain connection with places that have significance in your life e.g. rivers, mountains, church. Identify what motivates you and gives you a sense of purpose
- It's ok not to feel ok at this time. If you feel like you (or someone you know) is not coping, that's ok, but it is important to ask for help. Contracted players, and NZ Rugby, Super Rugby and Provincial Union staff and their immediate families have access to EAP. You can also call or text 1737 or speak to someone you trust like your GP or Team Doctor, PDM or mental skills provider.
- This time is also a great opportunity to explore and undertake personal development. There are some excellent online options available. We encourage you to utilise the PDMs in your environment. They have extensive resources and contacts for online learning, both formal courses and informal tutorials, and can help find something that interests you, or reach out through NZ Rugby and the NZ Rugby Players Association.

Tools to help you

- Attached are a few Head First resources to help manage your wellbeing:
 - Player Wellbeing Plan
 - Wellbeing During Uncertainty
- It may be helpful to look at this resource to understand the ups and downs some or all of us might be experiencing when going through unprecedented times like the COVID-19 pandemic <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters/phases-disaster>
- You can also reach out to your Team Doctors who can help with any questions you may have on COVID-19.

More information

- For a full run down on what the different Alert Levels mean we recommend you take a look at this <https://covid19.govt.nz/assets/resources/tables/COVID-19-alert-levels-detailed.pdf>
- You are likely to have seen this but if not check out this cartoon illustrating some of the simple points about the science of COVID-19 <https://thespinoff.co.nz/covid-19/25-03-2020/the-side-eye-viruses-vs-everyone/>
- For more information visit the dedicated NZ Government website on COVID-19 <https://covid19.govt.nz/>