

Forest Ringette Association (FRA)

Return to Play Following Illness or Injury Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and well-being of all FRA players and bench staff by providing clear and consistent guidelines for returning to ringette activities following an illness or injury.

FRA prioritizes participant safety in all return-to-play decisions. This policy applies to all ringette-related activities, including but not limited to:

- Games
- Practices
- Warm-ups
- Off-ice training
- Power skating
- Dryland training
- Conditioning activities
- Any FRA or team-sanctioned event

Concussion Protocol

This policy does **not** apply to suspected or confirmed concussions.

All concussion-related situations must follow the policies and protocols established by Ringette Ontario, including concussion awareness, management, and return-to-play requirements.

Scope

This policy applies to any FRA player or bench staff member who:

- Sustains an injury that impacts their ability to participate in ringette activities (whether related to ringette or not);
- Is removed from participation due to injury or illness, either by themselves, a guardian, or bench staff;
- Experiences a significant illness (e.g., mononucleosis or similar conditions affecting safe participation).

Policy

1. Medical Clearance

Before returning to participation, one of the following must be provided to the team Trainer:

- A medical note that either:
 - Outlines a return-to-play progression; or
 - Confirms the individual is medically cleared for full participation without restrictions
 - Written confirmation from the individual (or guardian if under 18) stating the player has permission to return

OR

- If no medical treatment is sought:
 - Written confirmation from the individual (or guardian if under 18) stating:
 - Medical attention was not deemed necessary; and
 - They are requesting to return to participation

2. On-Ice Assessment

- The individual must participate in at least one on-ice session for evaluation as determined by the Trainer
- The assessment must be conducted by:
 - The team Trainer; and
 - At least one member of the coaching staff
- The purpose is to confirm the individual is symptom-free and able to safely participate.

3. Return-to-Play Decision

- The **Trainer** holds primary responsibility for determining return-to-play readiness.
- Decisions must:
 - Be made reasonably and in good faith;
 - Prioritize the safety and well-being of the individual
- The Trainer may consult:

- Bench staff
- FRA Vice President or designate
- In the event of disagreement:
 - The FRA Vice President (or designate) will make the final decision
- If an immediate decision is required and the Vice President is unavailable:
 - The Trainer must err on the side of caution

Conflict of Interest

If the Trainer has a conflict of interest (e.g., is the parent of the player or directly involved):

- The Trainer must step aside from decision-making
- The Vice President (or designate) assumes responsibility

If immediate action is required and no Vice President is available:

- Available bench staff will make the decision collaboratively
- Safety must remain the priority

Important Clarification

Return-to-play decisions made under this policy are **safety determinations only**, not medical decisions.

- Medical decisions can only be made by qualified healthcare professionals (e.g., physician, physiotherapist).
- Where medical guidance exists, it **overrides all other considerations**.

If no medical professional is involved:

- The Trainer must use informed judgment
- The Vice President should be consulted if uncertainty exists

4. Injury Reporting

FRA requires consistent and transparent reporting of injuries and illnesses:

- Trainers must:
 - Report all ringette-related injuries through the Ringette Ontario Injury Tracker
 - Submit reports through FRA's internal injury reporting system

- Provide a copy of the report to the Head Coach
- FRA's internal reporting system is used for:
 - Executive awareness only
 - No automatic intervention unless requested

Resources

- Ringette Ontario Injury Tracker
- FRA Injury Reporting Tool
- Ringette Ontario Concussion Policy
- Ringette Ontario Return-to-Play Policy
- Concussion Codes of Conduct (Athletes & Bench Staff)
- Concussion Management Guidelines

Review Cycle

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the FRA Board of Directors to ensure alignment with Ringette Ontario standards and best practices.