Player Wellness Check

INJURY PREVENTION & PLAYER CARE - COACH GUIDANCE

INJURY PREVENTION & PLAYER CARE

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WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

A simple wellness check can help coaches notice when a young player may not be ready for normal training or competition. It is not a medical assessment; its value is in opening communication and identifying concerns that may need a parent, guardian or qualified healthcare professional.

1 PURPOSE

Use the form to capture how the player feels before activity, including tiredness, sleep, soreness, discomfort, mood and readiness. The aim is to support sensible coaching decisions and player communication.

- Use responses as a prompt for conversation, not a diagnosis.
- Create an environment where players can answer honestly without fear of losing their place.

2 WHEN TO USE IT

Use it before training or matches when wellness information would help, particularly during busy schedules, after travel, after illness, or when a player has reported fatigue or discomfort.

- Keep the process brief and consistent.
- Younger players may need questions explained in simple language.

3 HOW TO USE THE FORM

Ask the player to complete or discuss the check before activity. Review any low ratings or “yes” responses to pain, unusual tiredness or poor readiness. Record any action taken.

- Do not pressure a player to change an answer.
- Respect privacy and share information only with appropriate people.

4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for changes from the player’s normal pattern, repeated poor sleep, unusual fatigue, pain, illness symptoms, low mood or a player saying they do not feel ready to participate.

- One answer may be insignificant; repeated changes deserve attention.
- Pain or suspected injury should not be managed through a scoring system alone.

5 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Adjust activity where appropriate and follow club procedures. If there is pain, injury, illness, concussion concern or anything outside the coach’s scope, involve the parent/guardian and seek assessment from an appropriately qualified healthcare professional.

- Record the action taken.
- Do not use the form to medically clear a player.

COACH TIP

Treat the wellness check as a conversation starter. A player who feels listened to is more likely to report concerns early, before they become bigger problems.

General coaching guidance only. These resources do not diagnose, treat or clear injuries and do not replace advice from a doctor, physiotherapist or other qualified healthcare professional. For pain, injury, illness, concussion concerns or uncertainty about return to activity, follow club safeguarding procedures and seek appropriate medical advice.

Training & Match Recovery Guide

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WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

Recovery supports a young player's ability to train, learn and enjoy football across a busy week. Coaches can influence recovery habits by planning sensible workloads and reinforcing simple behaviours such as sleep, rehydration, refuelling and appropriate rest.

1 PURPOSE

Use the guide to reinforce practical recovery habits after training and matches and to help players and families understand that recovery is part of the development process.

- Focus on simple habits that are realistic for the player's age and family routine.
- Avoid presenting recovery strategies as medical treatment.

2 WHEN TO USE IT

Use it after demanding sessions, matches, tournaments, travel or periods with several football activities close together. It can also support parent and player education at the start of a season.

- Recovery needs vary with age, workload, environment and the individual.
- Extra recovery is not a substitute for reducing excessive load.

3 HOW TO USE THE FORM

Use the form as a checklist or discussion aid. Encourage fluids, an appropriate meal or snack, sleep, light normal movement and a gradual return to the next football activity based on how the player feels.

- Keep guidance age-appropriate and practical.
- Avoid prescribing supplements or treatments outside your role.

4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for players who remain unusually tired, sore, irritable, unwell or unable to perform normal movements comfortably. Also notice repeated late finishes, travel or congested schedules that reduce recovery time.

- Persistent or worsening symptoms need more than routine recovery advice.
- Pain should not be "trained through" simply to keep a schedule.

5 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Plan the next session with the previous load in mind. Reduce or modify activity if recovery appears incomplete, and involve parents/guardians or qualified healthcare professionals when symptoms, pain or injury concerns persist.

- Build recovery into weekly planning rather than adding it afterwards.
- Document any significant modification or referral.

COACH TIP

For young players, the best recovery strategies are usually the basics done consistently: sensible workload, food, fluids, sleep and enough time between demanding activities.

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Injury Prevention Checklist

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WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

No checklist can prevent every injury, but good preparation and a safe environment can reduce avoidable risks. The coach's role is to create appropriate conditions for participation, not to diagnose medical problems.

1 PURPOSE

Use the checklist to review controllable factors such as playing area, equipment, footwear, warm-up, player readiness, progression of activity and emergency arrangements.

- Use it to improve preparation and consistency.
- Treat it as a risk-reduction tool, not a guarantee against injury.

2 WHEN TO USE IT

Use it before sessions, matches, tournaments or new activities, and periodically as part of club coaching standards. It is especially useful when venues, surfaces or weather conditions change.

- Recheck conditions if circumstances change during the session.
- Apply club and governing-body safety procedures alongside the checklist.

3 HOW TO USE THE FORM

Work through each item before activity and correct issues that can reasonably be addressed. If a condition cannot be made safe, change the activity, area or plan rather than simply accepting the risk.

- Record significant concerns and action taken.
- Make sure emergency contacts and procedures are understood by staff.

4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for hazards, unsuitable equipment, inappropriate footwear, extreme conditions, players reporting pain or illness, sudden workload increases and activities that are not suitable for the age or ability of the group.

- A safe environment includes emotional as well as physical safety.
- Repeated issues may indicate a club-level problem rather than a one-off coaching issue.

5 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Remove or reduce identified risks, communicate relevant concerns to staff and families, and escalate facility, safeguarding or medical issues through the correct club process. Seek qualified medical advice where a player's health or injury status is uncertain.

- Review recurring hazards rather than repeatedly working around them.
- Update coaching plans when risk controls change the activity.

COACH TIP

The most useful checklist is one that changes behaviour. If an item is repeatedly marked as a concern, address the underlying cause rather than simply recording it again.

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Managing Training Load in Young Players

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WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

Young players often take part in football across clubs, schools, academies and other sports. Coaches may see only part of that total workload, so communication and sensible planning are essential to avoid unnecessarily heavy or sudden increases in activity.

1 PURPOSE

Use the resource to help coaches consider the amount, intensity and frequency of football a player is completing and to identify situations where training may need to be adjusted.

- Consider the player's total activity, not only your own sessions.
- Use load information as a coaching aid, not a medical formula.

2 WHEN TO USE IT

Use it when planning weekly and seasonal programmes, during fixture congestion, after breaks, around tournaments, during growth periods, or when a player reports unusual fatigue, soreness or reduced readiness.

- Pay particular attention to sudden increases after inactivity.
- Communicate with families when players participate in several environments.

3 HOW TO USE THE FORM

Record or discuss recent football and other demanding activity, then plan the current session accordingly. Progress training gradually and provide suitable rest or modified work where the overall week has been demanding.

- Avoid relying on one number to define what is "safe".
- Individual response matters as much as the planned session.

4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for rapid increases in activity, repeated high-intensity days, limited recovery, declining enthusiasm, unusual fatigue, persistent soreness, reduced performance or a player struggling to complete normal football actions comfortably.

- Growth, sleep, school demands and travel can affect how load is tolerated.
- Persistent pain or symptoms require appropriate medical assessment.

5 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Adjust the programme, communicate with the player and family, and coordinate with other coaches where possible. If symptoms suggest injury, illness or a problem beyond normal training fatigue, stop relying on load management alone and seek qualified advice.

- Plan demanding and lighter days deliberately.
- Rebuild load progressively after absence.

COACH TIP

The goal is not to make young players do less football; it is to make sure the amount and progression of football are appropriate for the individual and their wider week.

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Return-to-Training Considerations

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WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

Returning after injury or illness should be a gradual process based on appropriate medical guidance and the player's current function. A coach can manage football exposure, but should not diagnose an injury or provide medical clearance.

1 PURPOSE

Use the resource to help plan and record a progressive return to football once the player has appropriate clearance or guidance. It supports communication between the player, family, coach and healthcare professional.

- Use medical restrictions or recommendations exactly as provided.
- Separate "available to attend" from "ready for unrestricted training".

2 WHEN TO USE IT

Use it whenever a player is returning after an injury, significant illness, concussion, surgery or another absence where activity may need to be rebuilt progressively.

- Concussion and serious injuries require specific medical protocols.
- Do not accelerate the process simply because an important match is approaching.

3 HOW TO USE THE FORM

Confirm what the player is permitted to do, then progress from lower-demand football activity toward normal training in appropriate stages. Record what was completed and how the player responded.

- Stop or step back if symptoms return or worsen.
- Do not improvise medical tests or clearance criteria.

4 WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for pain, swelling, dizziness, unusual breathlessness, altered movement, hesitation, loss of confidence, excessive fatigue or any recurrence of the symptoms that led to the absence.

- A player can feel keen to return before they are ready for full load.
- Movement quality and confidence matter as well as completing the session.

5 WHAT TO DO NEXT

Continue progression only within the guidance provided. If symptoms recur, the player struggles with the planned stage, or there is uncertainty about readiness, pause progression and refer back to the parent/guardian and appropriate healthcare professional.

- Document each stage and any response.
- Full match participation should follow appropriate clearance and successful progression.

COACH TIP

The coach's job is to manage football exposure safely within professional medical guidance - not to decide whether an injured player is medically fit.

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