

COVID-19 is an ongoing worldwide pandemic caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). This virus appears to be highly infectious and at present there is not an effective treatment for it.

Most people (80%) who are infected have mild symptoms, some do not display any symptoms at all. While the majority of those who become symptomatic can be managed at home, 15-20% who contract the virus become unwell and may require hospitalisation. A small number (5%) require intensive care, some of whom require breathing support through ventilation. These patients are more likely to be male, older (>60) and have underlying conditions, please refer to the UK government's advice for further details.

It appears from the Office for National Statistics analysis that there is inequality in death rates from COVID-19 between those of a Caucasian background and BAME groups, which persists after taking into account age, where people live, and some measures of deprivation and prior health. The exact mortality rate associated with COVID-19 infection is unknown, but it may be as high as 1- 2% overall and is higher in vulnerable groups. COVID-19 will likely remain a potentially deadly virus until an effective vaccine is created, but vaccination is unlikely to be available for several months to years if at all.

Younger healthy people appear to be less likely to develop severe symptoms based on current knowledge, however there are still cases and deaths recorded in young apparently healthy people. Anyone, however, can spread the disease infecting those they love, their friends, colleagues, and teammates, who may then go on to develop the illness. It also appears that for some people particularly those having severe symptoms there can be ongoing negative health consequences.

Each player will need to decide when to return to Aussie rules league activity, based on their own circumstances and the arrangements that have been put in place for a safe return. All those returning to community Aussie rules must adopt the following code of behaviour:

1. Be aware of your own personal health. If you show any of the Covid-19 symptoms you must stay at home, inform NHS Test and Trace and seek medical advice
2. Be responsible. Read the guidance provided by AFL England, your league and by your club so that you are aware of the changes to the game and what is expected of you. This will include things like being prepared to wash your own kit, bringing your own labelled water bottle and being aware of changes to meet-up times. You must not share towels, clothing, water bottles, boots, headgear, guards, strapping.
3. Practise good hygiene. Wash your hands regularly, and before, during and after a game.
4. Where possible maintain social distancing. You must abide by strict social distancing measures at all times, except during essential risk assessed training and matches, keeping a 2m distance (or as advised by government at the time) between yourself and others at all times where reasonably practical in and out of the sporting environment.
5. Support NHS Test and Trace. You are likely to be asked to provide your details so that in the event of a Covid-19 outbreak those potentially infected can be traced. This is to the benefit of everyone so please ensure you cooperate.