



# **PLAYING FOOTBALL WITH A PROSTHESIS**

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**GUIDELINES**  
FOR FOOTBALLERS AND REFEREES

# PLAYING FOOTBALL WITH A PROSTHESIS

## The Football Association's guidelines for footballers and referees

Playing football provides many health benefits, however it is also recognised that, as a sport which can involve contact, playing football carries a risk of injury.

These guidelines have been developed by The Football Association to:

- i. assist any player with amputation wishing to wear a prosthesis whilst playing in FA sanctioned football matches; and
- ii. assist referees ensure a consistency of approach and implementation of the Laws of the Game.

### THE LAWS OF THE GAME

Law 4, which relates to players equipment states that ***“a player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous”***.

A player may therefore use equipment provided that its purpose is to protect the player and it must not pose a danger to the player or any other players or participants.

All players and their equipment must be inspected before the start of the match and substitutes must be inspected before they enter the field of play. If a player is wearing unauthorised or dangerous equipment during play, the referee should:

- Inform the player that the item in question must be removed;
- Order the player to leave the field of play at the next stoppage if he is unable or unwilling to comply;
- Caution the player if he wilfully refuses to comply or, having been told to remove the item, is discovered to be wearing the item again; and
- Caution a player who enters the field of play without permission and, if play is stopped to issue the caution, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the position of the ball when play was stopped, unless the player interfered with play in which case a direct free kick is awarded; a penalty kick is awarded if the interference occurs within the player's own penalty area.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that players who intend to play in FA sanctioned league and/or competition matches wearing a prosthesis obtain an original letter from their rehabilitation specialist or specialist prosthetist confirming that participation in football using the prosthesis does not pose a risk to the player wearing the prosthesis.
2. Applications are through County Football Associations (CFA). CFAs are the only organisations who can request a dispensation for a player with an amputation wishing to wear a prosthesis playing in FA sanctioned football matches.
3. It is recommended that the player provides a copy of this letter to the FA Medical team (c/o FA Senior Inclusion Manager [equality@thefa.com](mailto:equality@thefa.com)) who may deem it necessary to seek independent external specialist advice.
4. In order for the prosthesis to be assessed and to determine the potential risks to other players, the player should provide as much detail as possible about the prosthesis to the FA Medical team for the purposes of a risk assessment. This should ideally include full technical details of the prosthesis along with detailed photographs or video footage.
5. Where appropriate, The FA Medical team will provide the player with written recommendations in order to minimise the risk of injury to the player wearing the prosthesis and other players. This may include the need to adequately protect screws, pins and sharp edges, which could pose an injury risk.

6. Any such letter from The FA Medical team should be presented by the player to the referee before the kick-off of each FA sanctioned league and/or competition match the player is due to participate in, together with the letter from the player's rehabilitation specialist or specialist prosthetist advising on suitability and safety of the prosthesis for playing football.
7. The referee should examine the prosthesis and any letters provided to them by the player from the FA Medical team and the player's rehabilitation specialist or specialist prosthetist before each game. This will ensure that the prosthesis complies with the relevant safety recommendations and the Laws of the Game. The referee for each match has the authority to make the final decision as to whether the player may take part in that match as there may be occasions where the prosthesis has become dangerous since the initial risk assessment.
8. In the event of an unforeseen injury to a player wearing a prosthesis or to another player by the prosthesis, the referee should complete an Extraordinary Incident Report, which should be sent to, and reviewed on a case by case basis by, the FA Medical team.

## **PLAYER RESPONSIBILITY**

In deciding whether to participate in FA sanctioned football matches, both the player's own health/safety and the safety of other players and participants are of paramount importance. The decision to play football is therefore the player's choice alone to make (or that of his/her parent(s)/ legal guardian(s) if the player is a minor).

If the player decides to play in FA sanctioned football matches whilst wearing a prosthesis, they do so on a voluntary basis and entirely at their own risk. Should a player not adhere to the guidance outlined above, they may be held responsible for any injury which they or another player may suffer as a result of wearing a prosthesis during the match.