

There have been some questions regarding players' headwear.

Players may wear religious headwear during play. The general Federation Rule prohibiting headwear includes an exception for items that are worn for bona fide religious reasons or for medical/cosmetic reasons. Rule 3-5-3 exception (b) addresses religious headwear. It refers to documented evidence with the state association supporting the need to have one's head covered. By memo, FIBA has also clarified its rule on headwear to allow religious headwear. [Rule 4.4.2]

For our purposes in Ontario, we accept the traditional headwear worn by members of religious groups. This includes but is not limited to yarmulkes, turbans, and hijabs, which are worn in accordance with Jewish, Sikh, and Islamic religions

The headwear must be worn in a way that is unlikely to come off during play. It cannot be fastened to the hair by means of metal pins or clips of any kind. It can be taped or tied.

Players may not wear bobby pins, or barrettes. They may not play with beads in their hair. Elastics and cloth are acceptable to keep hair in place. Head bands, as distinct from headwear, for Federation games, must be white or the predominant colour of the team jersey, must be moisture absorbing, non-abrasive, and may bear only the one approved team or manufacturer's logo. For FIBA games, headbands can be any single solid colour.

If you are unfamiliar with any particular item of headwear or unfamiliar with the religion being cited, allow the player to play, ensuring that all the other criteria are met – no metal fasteners, no beads, non-abrasive material, won't easily fall off. After the game, send a note to the provincial interpreter and to your local board interpreter for further clarification and so that we have a consistent application of the rule.

A player with a medical condition may wear head covering for cosmetic or medical reasons. The rule requires a statement from a physician of the need for the covering. Cosmetic reasons are not for bad hair days or to cover one's bald spot. A medical justification is required. For practical reasons, officials do not need to see the statement of the physician. If the player or coach confirms that there is a legitimate medical need for the headwear, accept that position.

Ted Montgomery,  
OABO Interpreter