



RETURN TO SPORT After Concussion



- This tool is to help guide the return to sport after a concussion, but does not replace medical advice from a health care professional.
- Consult with your sport's guidelines for any sport-specific details on each stage.
- Each stage lasts at least 24 hours and recovery timelines will vary for each injury. Only move to the next stage when activities can be completed without aggravating symptoms. Do not try to rush the recovery.
- If symptoms return or worsen after moving to a new stage, return to the previous stage.
- When introducing new activities, always begin in 5-15 minute intervals with plenty of breaks. Gradually increase the intervals to up to 30-60 minutes as symptoms allow. Do not increase the interval until symptoms are not provoked by the activity.
- If symptoms do not improve within 48 hours after the initial injury, or if symptoms continue to get worse during the recovery, seek medical help immediately.

STAGE 1 | Rest/light mental activities

Create a quiet and calm environment to rest physically and cognitively. Sleep as much as needed - be checked on but not woken up. Minimize screen time during this stage. Avoid caffeine, reading, school work, sports, work, driving, and emotional situations, and keep social visits brief.

Recommended activities:

- Sleeping/rest, as much as needed
- Light walking
- Household cleaning/chores
- Preparing meals
- Other activities that don't require physical or mental exertion

MOVE TO NEXT STAGE | When symptoms begin to improve slightly OR after 48 hours of resting

STAGE 4 | Non-contact team drills

Gradually introduce more complex drills such as passing, or movements that involve jarring motions such as high speed stops. Continue avoiding drills that involve body and head contact and only have limited participation in group or team practices/drills.

Recommended activities:

- Light resistance training
- Drills involving sprinting
- Tennis/badminton/golf
- **Acquire medical clearance for contact from a health care professional (if feasible)**

MOVE TO NEXT STAGE | No symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of non-contact team drills

STAGE 2 | Light to moderate physical activities

Begin with light physical activity (~55% of max heart rate) and increase gradually to a moderate pace (~70% of max heart rate), as symptoms allow. Limited caffeine use is now acceptable. Avoid sport-specific and team/group activities. Only use screens as symptoms allow.

Recommended activities:

- Reading, board/card games, etc.
- Walking/yoga (light)
- Jogging/cycling (moderate)
- Increased peer contact
- **Contact coach/team to coordinate and plan the return to practice**

MOVE TO NEXT STAGE | No new/worsening symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise

STAGE 5 | Full-contact practice

Once medically cleared for contact by a health care professional, begin participating in full group or team practices/drills involving contact or potential blows to the head. Avoid participation in competitive activities/games.

Recommended activities:

- Full involvement in team practices/activities
- Resistance/weight training
- **Communicate with coach/team to coordinate competitive return**

MOVE TO NEXT STAGE | No symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of full participation

STAGE 3 | Sport-specific exercise

Begin individual drills specific to the sport that do not require body contact or impacts to the head (i.e soccer headers) or jarring motions (i.e. high speed stops or hitting a baseball). Avoid resistance/weight training and team practices.

Recommended activities:

- Hockey: skating/stickhandling
- Basketball: shooting/running
- Baseball: catching/fielding
- Agility ladders
- Limited P.E./recess involvement
- **Communicate progress with coach/team**

MOVE TO NEXT STAGE | No symptoms for 24 hours after 30-60 minutes of sport-specific exercise

STAGE 6 | Return to sport

Return to normal, unrestricted participation in competitive games, practices, physical activities, gym class, etc.

Carefully monitor symptoms and return to stage 3 if symptoms are aggravated during activities.

Returning to full involvement too quickly places you at higher risk of an extended recovery timeline, and sustaining a worse concussion or more severe brain injury.

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