

RETURN TO PLAY AFTER CONCUSSION IS A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

According to the most recent international consensus statement on concussion in sport, return to play (RTP) after a child or teen suffers a sport concussion should be a step-by-step, graduated, process which can begin after an initial period of 24-48 hours of both relative **physical and cognitive rest**:

STAGE	ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE
1. SYMPTOM-LIMITED ACTIVITY*	DAILY ACTIVITIES THAT DO NOT PROVOKE SYMPTOMS	GRADUAL REINTRODUCTION OF WORK/SCHOOL ACTIVITIES
2. LIGHT AEROBIC EXERCISE	WALKING OR STATIONARY CYCLING AT SLOW TO MEDIUM PACE. NO RESISTANCE TRAINING	INCREASE HEART RATE
3. SPORT-SPECIFIC EXERCISE	RUNNING DRILLS IN NETBALL, SOCCER, RUGBY. NO HEAD IMPACT ACTIVITIES	ADD MOVEMENT
4. NON-CONTACT TRAINING DRILLS	PROGRESSION TO HARDER TRAINING DRILLS, E.G. PASSING DRILLS IN NETBALL FOOTBALL; MAY START PROGRESSIVE RESISTANCE TRAINING	EXERCISE, COORDINATION AND INCREASED THINKING
5. FULL CONTACT PRACTICE	FOLLOWING MEDICAL CLEARANCE , PARTICIPATE IN NORMAL TRAINING ACTIVITIES	RESTORE <u>CONFIDENCE</u> AND ALLOW COACHING STAFF TO ASSESS FUNCTIONAL SKILLS
6. RETURN TO PLAY	NORMAL GAME PLAY	



- **24 hours between steps:** Generally, each step should take **at least** 24 hours, so that, assuming the athlete does not experience a recurrence of concussion symptoms at rest or with exercise as she progresses through the exercise program, she will be able to return to sports in about a week's time after symptoms have cleared.
- **Fall back if symptoms return:** If the student-athlete experiences a recurrence of concussion symptoms during any of the steps, they need to drop back to the previous level at which they were symptom-free, and try to progress again after a further 24-hour period of rest has passed.
- **7-day waiting period before beginning in absence of neurocognitive testing.** In the absence of daily testing by a healthcare professional with concussion expertise (certified athletic trainer, school/team/primary care/sports medicine physician, neuropsychologist) to clear a student-athlete to begin the graduated return-to-play protocol, a student-athlete should observe a 7 day rest/recovery period **before** commencing the protocol. This means that, for such athletes, return to sports will take at least two weeks. **Some leading concussion experts recommend that children and adolescents take a minimum of three weeks off before returning to sports after a concussion so do not be tempted to rush the stages.**
- **All recent studies that investigated the relationship between concussion and other injuries concluded:**
 - There was approximately at a 2.5 x greater chance of a Musculo-skeletal injury following concussion.
 - Females are approximately at a 1.5 x greater chance of suffering a concussion compared with male counterparts in the same sport.

DO NOT RUSH THE RETURN-TO-PLAY PROCESS

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