

Graduated Asymptomatic Return to Play (RTP) Protocol After a Concussion:

This program only applies to athletes with a first time *simple* concussion. Athletes with a history of multiple concussions either within the same season or prior seasons, complex or prolonged symptoms, history of mood disorder or learning disabilities generally need a more prolonged return to play and often an evaluation by a trained medical provider in the care of concussion. Once an athlete is *asymptomatic for 24-48 hours* they will progress in an asymptotic fashion through steps 2-6 steps prior to full return to play. Each step occurs *one day at a time*. If the athlete demonstrates *any* concussion or neurologic symptoms (i.e. headache, dizziness, nausea, blurred vision, ringing ears, dizziness, excessive fatigue, difficulty with concentration, mood disturbances, etc.) during exercise challenge or within 24 hours of the challenge, they will rest till asymptomatic for 24 hours prior to re-challenging them at the last level of exertion where they had no symptoms. The exercise challenge RTP needs to be done under the supervision of the Primary Care Physician or Provider, Sports Medicine Physician, Neurologist, or Certified Athletic Trainer (in consultation with the supervising medical provider).

TABLE 1. Graduated Return to Play Protocol

Rehabilitation Stage	Functional Exercise at Each Stage of Rehabilitation	Objective of Each Stage
1. No activity	Complete physical and cognitive rest	Recovery
2. Light aerobic exercise	Walking, swimming or stationary cycling keeping intensity <70% MPHR; no resistance training	Increase HR
3. Sport-specific exercise	Skating drills in ice hockey, running drills in soccer; no head impact activities	Add movement
4. Non-contact training drills	Progression to more complex training drills, eg, passing drills in football and ice hockey; may start progressive resistance training	Exercise, coordination, and cognitive load
5. Full contact practice	Following medical clearance, participate in normal training activities	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6. Return to play	Normal game play	

This protocol is from the latest 2008 International Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport. A free copy can be found in the Journal of Athletic Training under the following citation:
 “McCroly P, Meeuwisse W, Johnston K, Dvorak J, Aubry M, Molloy M, Cantu R: Consensus statement on concussion in sport: the 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich, November 2008. J Athl Train. 2009 Jul-Aug;44(4):434-48.”