



MANAGING RETURN TO ACTIVITIES POST-CONCUSSION

6-STEP RETURN TO PLAY PROGRESSION

Each state has its own unique legal requirements for organizations when allowing an athlete to return to activity following a concussion. You should consult with your local league administrators on the league's specific requirements for coaches and how you manage an athlete's return to play. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest the following general six-step return to play progression:



Back to Regular Non-Physical Activities

Before beginning any return to activities progression, a determination should occur with documented medical clearance from a licensed healthcare provider who has been trained in the evaluation and management of concussions.



Light Aerobic Activity

Begin with light aerobic exercise only to increase an athlete's heart rate. This means about 5 to 10 minutes on an exercise bike, walking or light jogging. No weightlifting at this point.



Moderate Activity

Continue with activities to increase an athlete's heart rate with body or head movement. This includes moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, moderate-intensity weightlifting (less time and/or less weight from their typical routine).



Heavy, Non-Contact Activity

Add heavy non-contact physical activity, such as sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary biking, regular weightlifting routine, non-contact sport-specific drills (in 3 planes of movement).



Practice and Full Contact

Athlete may return to practice and full contact (if appropriate for the sport) in controlled practice.



Competition

Athlete may return to competition.

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It is important for an athlete's parent(s) and coach(es) to watch for concussion symptoms after each day's return to play progression activity. An athlete should only move to the next step if they do not have any new symptoms at the current step. If an athlete's symptoms come back or if he or she gets new symptoms, this is a sign that the athlete is pushing too hard. The athlete should stop these activities and the athlete's medical provider should be contacted. After more rest and no concussion symptoms, the athlete can start at the previous step. It is important to monitor symptoms and cognitive function carefully during each increase of exertion.