



Children's National
Medical Center



Progressive Activity Program for Young Athletes Returning to Practice or Play

Only when an athlete's symptoms are gone, and in consultation with a healthcare professional, should he or she slowly and gradually return to sports practice. The timing and duration of each of these steps depends on the athlete's recovery, so this activity program should be tailored as needed. When available, be sure to work closely with the team's certified athletic trainer.

Step 1: 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 weight lifting at this point.

Step 2: 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 weight lifting (reduced time and/or reduced weight from the athlete's typical routine).

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

Step 4: Athlete may return to practice and full contact in controlled practice.

Step 5: Athlete may return to competition.