



Return to Play Guidelines for Concussion

Standard [return to play guidelines](#) include six basic steps:

1. **No activity** - a recovery stage with complete physical and cognitive rest. This means no exercise or sports but can also mean not going to school, or having a shortened day. This is a time to get lots of rest, get plenty of sleep, and eat well.
2. **Light aerobic exercise** to increase their heart rate (keep to less than 70% of maximum predicted heart rate), including 5 to 10 minutes of walking, light jogging, swimming, or stationary cycling, but no resistance training.
3. **Sport-specific exercise** to add movement, such as skating drills or running drills, moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary cycling, but no head impact activities. The goal is for your child to have some limited body and head movement, but the amount of time should still be limited to less than he or she usually spends exercising.
4. **Non-contact training drills** to raise exercise, coordination, and cognitive load, including progression to more complex training drills and resistance training, sprinting and running, high-intensity stationary cycling. This is a more intense workout that is close to your child's usual routine but is not to include any contact activity.
5. **Full contact practice** to restore confidence and assess functional skills and following medical clearance may participate in normal training activities
6. **Return to play**

Keep in mind that you shouldn't move to the next stage until you are symptom-free, which can keep some kids in the "no activity" stage for several days or longer.

And if the athlete develops symptoms while doing any of the stages, they should drop back to the previous stage and try again once they are symptom-free. Concussion symptoms should not come back during or after any of the exercises or activities during these return to play stages.

An [Acute Concussion Care \(ACE\) Plan](#) from the CDC can help to make sure you and your child, teachers, and coaches understand all of the steps involved in getting your child back to school and back into sports. Consider having your pediatrician fill out an ACE Care Plan for your child if he has had a concussion.

And see your pediatrician again if your child gets worse or isn't getting better in 10 to 14 days. A pediatric concussion specialist can also be helpful to manage your child who isn't getting better or who has multiple concussions.