

Return to Play (RTP) Progression after a Head Injury

Return to activity is a **medical decision** - after a physician (MD, DO or APN) has evaluated a student and it has been determined that the student has sustained a head injury/concussion; the following progression will be used to safely progress their return to play/activity (in both physical education and interscholastic sports).

Remember, this is a **gradual process**. These steps should not be completed in one day – there should be approximately **24 hours (or longer) for each stage** and **if post-concussion symptoms occur at any step, STOP activity and student’s parents (and medical provider) should be contacted**. After being reassessed, more rest and no concussion symptoms, the student can **start at the previous step**.

Start date for each stage	Rehabilitation Stage	Functional exercise at each stage of rehabilitation	Objective of each stage (success goal)
Date:	Baseline – no physical activity	Student is back to their regular academic school activities, is no longer experiencing symptoms from the injury and has OKAY from MD to begin RTP process	Recovery (Symptom free at rest)
Date:	Step 1 – light aerobic activity/exercise	Light aerobic exercise only to increase student’s heart rate. 5 to 10 minutes of walking, of light jogging or exercise bike. Other: _____ (No weight lifting or resistance training)	Increase heart rate without symptoms
Date:	Step 2 – moderate activity/exercise	Continue with activities to increase student’s heart rate with body or head movement. Moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary bike or moderate-intensity weightlifting Other: _____ (Less time from typical routine)	Increase heart rate without symptoms Add movement
Date:	Step 3 – heavy, non-contact activity	May add heavy non-contact physical activity. Sprinting/running, high-intensity stationary bike, regular weightlifting routine and non-contact sport drills (in 3 planes of movement) Other: _____	Progression to more complex exercise, coordination and cognitive load.
Date:	Step 4 – practice and full contact activity	With medical clearance may participate in normal full contact activities and practice/training in controlled practice Other: _____	Progression to more participation and practice, to restore confidence (and assess functional skills by coaching staff)
Date:	Step 5 – return to play (competition)	Full physical activity, normal physical education and /or game play	Return to play, full participation and/or competition