

GRADUAL RETURN TO SPORTS PARTICIPATION FOLLOWING A CONCUSSION

After a student-athlete has sustained a concussion, they will be started on a supervised Gradual Return to Sports Participation program only after they have received written medical clearance from a licensed health care provider. Ideally, the program will be supervised by a school certified athletic trainer (ATC).

Stage of Rehabilitation	Functional Exercises	Objective of the Stage
1. No Activity	Complete physical and cognitive rest	Recovery
2. Light aerobic exercise	Walking, swimming, stationary cycling, keep intensity < 70% maximum heart rate; no resistance exercises	Increase heart rate
3. Sport-specific exercise	Sport specific drills but no head impact	Add movement
4. No-contact training drills	More complex training drills; may start light resistance training	Improve exercise, coordination, cognitive load
5. Full-contact practice	After medical clearance – participate in normal training	Restore confidence and allow for coaches to assess functional skills
6. Return to play	Normal game play	

(2010 AAP Sport-Related Concussion in Children and Adolescents, 2008 Zurich Concussions in Sport Group Consensus Statement)

Each stage in concussion rehabilitation should last no less than 24 hours. The program will last for a minimum of five days before consideration of a return to competition. If symptoms recur during the rehabilitation program, the student-athlete should stop immediately. Once the student-athlete is asymptomatic for at least 24 hours, they should resume at the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress from there. Student-athletes must contact their licensed healthcare provider if symptoms return. Any student-athlete with multiple concussions or prolonged symptoms may require a longer concussion rehabilitation program, which should ideally be created by a physician who is experienced in concussion management.

Prior to participation in a full-contact practice the student-athlete will be given a post-injury ImPACT test that will be interpreted by a physician knowledgeable in concussion management. The ImPACT test results will be used in conjunction with the entire history and assessment to help determine “return to play” status.

As each sports concussion is unique, the concussion management plan will be individualized for each student-athlete. The ultimate goal of the concussion program is to allow a safe return to play and minimize any long-term health problems from a concussion.