

RETURNING TO RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY AFTER A CONCUSSION



When a child suffers a concussion, parents often wonder when their child can return to physical activity. The timing for your child’s return to recreational physical activity will depend on their specific needs. You can promote recovery and prevent ongoing symptoms by following a “return to play” plan like the one below. Your child’s doctor will adjust this plan to best meet your child’s needs, and your child will move through the plan at their own pace.

RETURN TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN

STEP 1: Your child may participate in light physical activities that have a low risk for head injury, including light walking and usual daily activities that don’t make symptoms significantly worse. This does not include any type of sports training.

STEP 2: If light physical activity does not significantly increase symptoms, your child can advance to moderate aerobic activity as tolerated. Once your child can participate in their usual daily activities with only mild symptoms, they can start some moderate aerobic exercises, including brisk walking, light jogging, stationary biking or playing in the yard or park. These activities should not make symptoms significantly worse.

STEP 3: If moderate aerobic activity does not significantly increase symptoms, your child can advance to heavier levels of aerobic activity. This includes exercises such as moderate jogging/running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, playing catch and kicking a soccer ball with an adult. Your child may not participate in activities that may have a high risk of head impact.

STEP 4: When your child is symptom-free, your doctor will discuss the process for fully returning to sports activities. This is called the Return to Play Protocol. When your child tolerates heavier levels of physical activity, they may advance to high-intensity non-contact physical exertion, including sprinting/running, stationary biking, light weightlifting and non-contact play. However, your child should not participate in head impact activities.

STEP 5: If your child is symptom-free on the Return to Play Protocol, ask the doctor if your child is ready to advance to full gym class and other contact and collision sports. Contact your child’s doctor with questions or concerns.

LIGHT ACTIVITY

- Light walking
- Usual daily activities such as household chores

MODERATE ACTIVITY

- Brisk walking
- Light jogging
- Light-intensity stationary biking
- Playing in the yard or park

HEAVY ACTIVITY

- Jogging/running
- Moderate-intensity stationary biking
- Playing catch with a baseball and kicking a soccer ball with an adult

HIGH INTENSITY

- Sprinting/running
- High-intensity stationary biking
- Light weightlifting
- Non-contact play

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Minds Matter Concussion Program at 215-590-6919 or visit www.chop.edu/concussion.