

Gradual Return to Sport Participation Following a Concussion

After a student-athlete has sustained a concussion, a 24-48 hour rest period is observed after which an athlete may gradually re-integrate into limited daily activities and gradual return to academics (see Return to Learn guidelines). If an activity increases the student-athlete's symptoms the activity should be stopped immediately and they should return to the earlier stage the following day. Once an athlete has successfully started a gradual return to academics, a gradual return to physical activity can be made at the same time. Prior to an athlete returning to full participation in sport, she or he must have fully resumed full academic participation, must be cleared by licensed healthcare professional, and returned to his/her baseline on ImPACT, and Graded Concussion Symptom Checklist. Each step of the process must be supervised by a coach and the school ATC.

Return to Play Criteria(General Guidelines)

Stage of Rehabilitation	Functional Exercise
Stage 1: Gradual re-introduction	Gradual progression of daily/work activities that does not provoke symptoms
Stage 2: Light physical exertion	Low levels of walking, jogging, or stationary bike.
Stage 3: Moderate levels of physical exertion	May participate in a practice with no contact.
Stage 4: Non-contact sport specific drills	May participate in agility/exertion drills with no contact.
Stage 5: Full contact practice	May participate in full practice.
Stage 6: Return to full normal game play*	

*An additional day of full contact practice may be added if deemed necessary by the Athletic Trainer. This may be necessary depending on the sport to which the student-athlete is returning, practice status, previous concussion history, and severity of symptoms over the course of healing.

**Specific stage progression and stage delineation is at the discretion of the Athletic Trainer. There should be at least 24 hours (or longer) for each step of the progression. If any symptoms worsen during exercise, the athlete will go back to the previous stage. Resistance training should be added only in the later stages (stage 3 or 4 at the earliest). If symptoms are persistent (eg, more than 10-14 days) the athlete should be referred to a healthcare professional who is an expert in concussion for further evaluation and management.