

Post COVID-19 Gradual Return-to-Play Progression

The overall objective of a return-to-play (RTP) protocol is to gradually and safely increase the athlete's physical activity after an illness or injury. RTP after COVID-19 can be thought of as similar to a RTP protocol for concussion. With any viral infection, including but not limited to COVID-19, recovery from infection needs to occur. This includes resolution of symptoms, including fever, with no use of medications/treatment. Deconditioning during recovery from infection often occurs.

Prior to starting any gradual RTP, the level of severity of COVID-19 infection and necessary recovery period should be determined, along with verifying resolution of symptoms, by a healthcare provider. Gradual RTP progression should occur **OVER AT LEAST 7 DAYS**. Those who had more significant symptoms and/or a prolonged recovery from infection may experience more deconditioning and require a longer RTP period.

Below is a potential gradual RTP schedule. It should be adjusted based on the individual's type of previous activity and sport. Supervision is recommended and monitor for any red flag symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, irregular heart rate/beats, and dizziness/fainting. If an individual experiences these red flags, activity should be stopped and notify your healthcare provider.

	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6
DURATION	Over 1-2 days	At least 1 day	At least 1 day	Over 1-2 days	At least one day	FULLY RETURN TO SPORT
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Light	Increase frequency	Increase duration and complexity	Increase intensity	Participate in usual sport-specific activity	
EXAMPLES OF EXERCISE	Walking, elliptical, stationary bike at low intensity	Jogging, running drills, stationary bike at increased intensity, jump rope	Sport specific drills, more complex drills LIGHT WEIGHT LIFTING CAN START	Normal practice activities	Complete practice	
TIME	15 minutes	30 minutes	45 minutes	60 minutes	Entire practice	
% HEART RATE	<70%	<80%	<80%	<80%		

To determine max heart rate: Subtract age from 220 and multiply by percentage.

*Adapted from Children's Hospital of Michigan and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta