

# Return to Activity

This tool is a guideline for managing an individual's return to activity following a concussion and does not replace medical advice. Timelines and activities may vary by direction of a health care professional.

| STAGE 1:  | STAGE 2:   | STAGE 3:   | STAGE 4:   | STAGE 5:   |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Initial rest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay home in a quiet and calm environment</li> <li>Limit your screen time (computer, television, and smartphone use)</li> <li>Keep any social visits brief</li> <li>Sleep as much as your body needs while trying to maintain a regular night sleeping schedule</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: The goal for each stage is to find the 'sweet spot' between doing too much and too little.</b></p> | <p><b>Prepare to return to activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Test your readiness by trying some simple, familiar tasks such as reading, using the computer, or shopping for groceries</li> <li>Keep the time on each activity brief (e.g., less than 30 minutes) and take regular rest breaks</li> <li>Go for walks or try other light physical activity (e.g., swimming, stationary bike), without becoming short of breath</li> <li>Keep bed rest during the day to a minimum. It is unlikely to help your recovery</li> </ul> | <p><b>Increase your activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradually return to usual activities and decrease rest breaks</li> <li>Start with less demanding activities before harder ones</li> <li>Physical activity might include jogging, lifting light weights, or non-contact sport drills, gardening, dancing</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: You could start returning to school or work on a part-time basis (e.g., a few hours per day).</b></p> | <p><b>Gradually resume daily activities</b></p> <p>Resuming daily activities can be challenging because your energy and capacity for activities may be variable, but should improve day-to-day or week-to-week.</p> <p>Students and workers may require accommodations, such as reduced hours, reduced workload, extra time for assignments, or access to a quiet distraction-free work environment.</p> | <p><b>Full return to activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Full class schedule, with no rest breaks or accommodations</li> <li>Full work schedule with usual expectations for productivity</li> <li>Student athletes should not return to sport competition until they have fully returned to school</li> </ul> <p><b>Only return to contact sports or dangerous job duties (e.g., operating heavy equipment, working from heights) when cleared by your doctor.</b></p> |
| <b>Rest</b>   | <b>Get ready to return</b>   | <b>Start your return</b>   | <b>Continue your return</b>  |  |
| When symptoms start to improve OR after resting for 2 days max, <b>BEGIN STAGE 2</b>  | Tolerates simple, familiar tasks, <b>BEGIN STAGE 3</b>   | Tolerates further increase in level of activity, <b>BEGIN STAGE 4</b>  | Tolerates partial return to usual activities, <b>BEGIN STAGE 5</b>   |  |

If new or worsening symptoms are experienced at any stage, go back to the previous stage for at least 24 hours. You may need to move back a stage more than once during the recovery process.

Adapted from Noah D. Silverberg, PhD

Each person will progress at his/her own pace. It is best not to "push" through symptoms. If you do too much, your symptoms may worsen. Decrease your activity level and your symptoms should settle. Then continue to gradually increase your activity in smaller increments.