

# Concussion Management: Guidelines for Progressive Return to Play



## Medical Assessment

- Anyone who might have a concussion should stop playing right away and not return to play that day.
- Only an appropriate healthcare professional can tell you if you have a concussion and when it is safe to play.



## Short Rest Period

- During the first 24 to 48 hours after injury, a short rest from physical and mental activities, or just a slight modification, may be appropriate to help manage the initial concussion signs and symptoms.



## Expose-Recover Method

- Use this method to expose yourself to normal, nonrisk activities when symptom severity is between 0 to 4 out of 10, with 0 being no symptoms and 10 being extremely severe.
- If symptoms increase to 5 out of 10 or greater during activity, you should stop and give yourself a 10 to 15 minute break. This expose-recover pattern can be used throughout the day.



## Light Activity

- Nonrisk, noncontact activities include walking, body weight squats and lunges, and a stationary bike.
- Increase heart rate from a resting level that can be easily maintained for up to 30 minutes per day while being sure symptom severity stays between 0 to 4 out of 10.



## Moderate Activity

- Nonrisk, noncontact activities that introduce head motion and rotation include jogging, pull-ups, push-ups, sit-ups, individual sport skills and technique drills.
- Increase heart rate to a moderate level that can be maintained for up to 30 minutes per day while ensuring symptom severity stays between 0 to 4 out of 10.



## Maximal Activity

- Nonrisk, noncontact activities with full head and body range of motion include jump rope, weightlifting, plyometrics, advanced individual sport drills.
- Increase heart rate from a resting level that can be easily maintained for up to 30 minutes per day ensuring symptom severity stays between 0 to 4 out of 10.



## Clearance from Concussion

- It is important to receive written clearance from an appropriate healthcare professional after a concussion prior to returning to full participation.



## Full Contact Practice

- During full contact practice, it is important to report any return of symptoms to the appropriate healthcare professional immediately.
- A progression from light/incidental contact to full/unexpected contact is recommended to help regain confidence.



## Return to Play

- Follow safe play strategies and guidelines at all times to minimize risk of injury, and report any changes in physical or mental abilities as soon as possible.

When follow-up care is needed after a concussion, contact the physician-based team of specialists with the Inova Sports Medicine Concussion Program by calling the Concussion Hotline at 703.970.6427 or visiting [inova.org/SportsConcussion](http://inova.org/SportsConcussion)

