

# Return to Activity

This tool is intended for a general audience and serves as a guideline for managing an individual's return to activity following a concussion and does not replace medical advice. Timelines and activities may vary based on direction from a doctor, nurse practitioner, or healthcare professional with relevant training. **Begin Step 1 within 24 hours of injury, with progression through each subsequent step taking a minimum of 24 hours.**

STEP 1:	STEP 2:		STEP 3:	STEP 4:
<p><b>Activities of daily living and relative rest*</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximum of 24-48 hours</li> <li>• Activities at home such as social interactions and light walking that do not result in more than mild and brief** exacerbation (worsening) of concussion symptoms.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparing meals</li> <li>• Housework</li> <li>• Light walking</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimize screen time for first 24-48 hours following concussion.</li> <li>• Sleep as much as your body needs while trying to maintain a regular night sleeping schedule.</li> <li>• Avoid driving during the first 24-48 hours after a concussion.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: The goal for each step is to find the balance between doing too much and too little.</b></p>	<p><b>2A: Light effort aerobic activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to approximately 55% of maximum heart rate (predicted according to age - i.e. 220-age).</li> <li>• In a safe and controlled environment, engage in light effort aerobic activity.</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stationary cycling</li> <li>• Walking at slow to brisk pace</li> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Dancing</li> <li>• Housework</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of devices with screens may be gradually resumed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2B: Moderate effort aerobic activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to approximately 70% of maximum heart rate (predicted according to age - i.e. 220-age).</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See examples in Step 2A</li> <li>• Exercises and activities that do not result in more than mild and brief** exacerbation (worsening) of concussion symptoms and do not have a risk of falling or head impact.</li> <li>• Take a break and modify activities as needed with the aim of gradually increasing tolerance and the intensity of aerobic activities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Increase activity intensity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in normal day-to-day activities, including normal physical/training activities, school gym-class, and work-related activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workouts</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Fast-paced walking</li> <li>• Shoveling</li> <li>• Yoga/Pilates</li> </ul> <p><b>It is important to get medical clearance before returning to activities that involve any risk of inadvertent head impact.</b></p>	<p><b>Return to activity</b></p> <p>Back to normal, unrestricted activity</p> <p><b>Examples:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outdoor biking</li> <li>• Paddling and water activities</li> <li>• Normal unrestricted work-related tasks and higher risk activities</li> <li>• School gym class</li> <li>• No restrictions on physical activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: Returning to high-risk activities before you have recovered increases the risk of delayed recovery and for sustaining another more severe concussion or serious injury.</b></p>
<p><b>Activities of daily living, as tolerated</b></p>	<p><b>Increase heart rate</b></p>		<p><b>Increase intensity of aerobic activities, resume usual intensity of exercise, coordination, and activity-related cognitive skills</b></p>	
<p>After a maximum of 24-48 hours after injury, <b>BEGIN STEP 2</b></p>	<p>If can tolerate moderate aerobic activity, <b>BEGIN STEP 3</b></p>		<p>If can tolerate further increase in aerobic activity to pre-injury levels and have received medical clearance, <b>BEGIN STEP 4</b></p>	

**Medical determination of readiness to return to at-risk activities should occur prior to returning to any activities that pose risk of contact, collision, or fall.**

Refer to the **Return to Sport Strategy** for information on returning to high-risk activities, including sports and competitive play. If more than mild exacerbation (worsening) of symptoms (i.e., more than 2 points on a 0-10 scale\*\*\*) occurs during Steps 1-2, stop the activity, and attempt to exercise the next day. Individuals experiencing concussion symptoms during Steps 3-4 should return to Step 2 to establish full resolution of symptoms with exertion before engaging in at-risk activities. Written determination of medical clearance should be provided before returning to activities that involve any risk of inadvertent head impact. Driving should resume after consultation with a doctor, nurse practitioner, or healthcare professional.

\*Relative rest: activities of daily living including walking and other light physical and cognitive activities are permitted as tolerated.  
 \*\*Mild exacerbation (worsening) of symptoms: No more than a 2-point increase when compared with the pre-activity value on a 0-10-point symptom severity scale.\*\*\*"Brief" exacerbation of symptoms: Worsening of symptoms for up to 1 hour.  
 \*\*\*0-10 point symptom severity scale: Please see the [Visual Analog Scale](#) for an example of a 0-10 symptom severity scale.