

Return to Play Progression

Guiding the recovery of individuals of any age with MTBI who participate in competitive or recreational activities requires careful management to avoid re-injury or prolonged recovery. Athletes engaged in collision sports require special management and evaluation to ensure full recovery prior to their return to play.

- Keep in mind, Hayden is a catcher and there could be a collision at home plate (player, at or ball).
- As recommended by PONY, we should always err on the side of caution

Managing an Athlete with a Concussion

For many health care professionals, the first chance to assess a young athlete with a suspected concussion will not be on the sidelines, but an office or emergency department. This examination will likely include a physical examination, covering cognition, neurology, balance, and most importantly, any signs of deteriorating neurological function.

For health care professionals working in an emergency department, an athlete should be referred for follow up care from a health care professional who can help him or her gradually return to school and to play when fully recovered. **An athlete should not leave an emergency department and return to practice or play the same day nor should a future return to practice or play date be given at the time of an emergency department visit.**

There are 5 gradual steps to help safely return an athlete to play:

Baseline: No Symptoms

As the baseline step of the Return to Play Progression, the athlete needs to have completed physical and cognitive rest and not be experiencing concussion symptoms for a minimum of 24 hours. ***Keep in mind, the younger the athlete, the more conservative the treatment.***

Step 1: Light aerobic activity

The Goal: Only to increase an athlete's heart rate.

The Time: 5 to 10 minutes.

The Activities: Exercise bike, walking, or light jogging.

Absolutely no weight lifting, jumping or hard running.

Step 2: Moderate activity

The Goal: Limited body and head movement.

The Time: Reduced from typical routine.

The Activities: Moderate jogging, brief running, moderate-intensity stationary biking, and moderate-intensity weightlifting

Step 3: Heavy, non-contact activity

The Goal: More intense but non-contact

The Time: Close to typical routine

The Activities: Running, high-intensity stationary biking, the player's regular weightlifting routine, and non-contact sport-specific drills. This stage may add some cognitive component to practice in addition to the aerobic and movement components introduced in Steps 1 and 2.

Step 4: Practice & full contact

The Goal: Reintegrate in full contact practice.

Step 5: Competition

The Goal: Return to competition.