

Returning to Play After a Concussion

While fairly common in youth sports, athletes should never shrug off concussions as they are a type of brain injury. Cook Children's Orthopedics and Sports Medicine concussion team wants to make sure that young athletes who have suffered concussions are not returning to activities too soon.

Athletes must meet the following criteria before returning to play:

- Be symptom free, without the use of medication, for at least 24 hours
- Be in school full time without the use of accommodations and participating in normal day-to-day activities
- Have a normal balance assessment
- Have a normal neurological exam
- Successfully complete neurocognitive testing

Once an athlete is symptom free and has returned to their normal daily activities, they must complete a gradual return to play progression. Each step should be completed, in order, with 24 hours between each step. For athletes with a prolonged recovery, physicians may choose to alter, delay or extend this progression. If **ANY** symptoms develop while completing these steps the athlete needs to STOP exercising immediately. After returning to being symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication, the athlete can return to the previous step.

Non-Contact Steps

1. Light aerobic exercise for 20 minutes (stationary bike, walking, elliptical)
2. Sport specific exercise for 30 minutes (foot skills, running routes, shooting, dribbling)
3. Sport specific non-contact practice for 30-45 minutes (passing drills, catching a ball, shooting drills) **AND** progressive resistance training for at least 15 minutes (push-ups, squats, lunges, burpees)

At this time the athlete must be cleared by their physician to participate in any contact activities.

Contact Steps

4. Full contact practice for 60 minutes
5. Full game participation

We know the return to play process can be overwhelming at times, but we are here to guide you through it. If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to our team via phone call or MyChart message.

Cook Children's Sport Concussion Clinic – Phone Numbers

Fort Worth – Walsh Ranch/Hurst/Mansfield: 682-885-4405

Prosper: 682-303-4200

Scan the QR code with your phone to learn more

