

Concussion Return-to-Play Protocol

The standard 6-step graduated progression · minimum 24 hours per step · ConcussionCareFinder.com

1 Symptom-limited daily activity

Normal daily life that doesn't provoke more than mild symptom increase. Return to school/work before returning to sport.

2 Light aerobic exercise

Walking or stationary cycling at easy pace (≤ 55 – 70% max HR). No resistance training.

3 Sport-specific exercise

Running/skating drills and movement patterns of the sport. No head-impact risk activities.

4 Non-contact training drills

Harder, more complex drills; progressive resistance training may resume.

5 Full-contact practice

Only after medical clearance. Most states require written clearance for youth athletes from a provider trained in concussion management.

6 Return to sport

Full competition.

Rules

- **Minimum 24 hours per step** — fastest possible protocol is about one week; youth athletes typically take longer.
- **If symptoms return:** stop, rest until back to baseline for 24 hours, then resume at the previous step.
- **No same-day return to play** after any suspected concussion.
- Athlete should be back in school (with accommodations if needed) before completing return to play.

Educational handout based on international consensus (graduated return-to-sport strategy). Not medical advice — clearance decisions belong to a licensed healthcare provider. Find concussion specialists near you at ConcussionCareFinder.com · Supported by ConcussionCare+