

## Return to Play Protocol for Concussion

A concussion is a type of mild brain injury. Every concussion should be taken seriously and be followed by a health care provider who has expertise in brain injury. In the initial period of recovery following a concussion, athletes should generally “take it easy” to allow the brain time to rest and heal. Athletes should be free of all concussion-related symptoms (e.g. headache) before starting the return to play protocol. An easy walk around the neighborhood is okay while still symptomatic, but should not count as step 1. Once the athlete is entirely free of symptoms and a health care provider says it is medically safe, returning to play should occur in a gradual, step-wise fashion, as follows:

1. Light aerobic exercise such as brisk walking or stationary cycling for 15-20 minutes.
2. Sport specific exercise such as skating in hockey or dribbling in soccer with minimal resistance from other players for 30-45 minutes.
3. Non-contact practice with the addition of resistance such as blocking pads in football for 1-2 hours.

### MEDICAL CLEARANCE NEEDED BY A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

4. Full contact practice. An example would be full pads and contact in hockey or football practice.
5. Competitive game play including tournaments.

With this stepwise progression, the athlete should continue to proceed to the next step if free of symptoms at the current step. There should be a 24 hour period between each step. If any symptoms reoccur, the athlete should drop back to the previous step and try to progress again after 24 hours of rest. Remember, medical clearance by your health care provider is required before returning to play in any sport.

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Health Care Provider's Signature

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Date

*If your school or coaches have any questions or concerns, we are available over phone at (520) 222-8076 or visit our website at [sparcctucson.com](http://sparcctucson.com) for our contact information and handouts.*