



## Concussion Gradual Return-to-Play (RTP) Protocol FAQ



### Who must go through the RTP Protocol?

All student-athletes diagnosed with a concussion are required to complete a Return-to-Play Protocol that proceeds in a step-by-step fashion with gradual, progressive stages.

### Can a student-athlete engage in physical activity/exercise prior to starting Stage 1?

A qualified yes; keeping in mind that the physical activity/exercise should involve **NO** risk of head trauma and should occur only under direct orders of the treating Licensed Health Care Provider (LHCP) who has evaluated the student-athlete. This light exertion can be started before a student-athlete is entirely asymptomatic. There is evidence that “sub-symptom threshold exercise” (i.e. light exertion that does not cause new or worsen existing symptoms) is safe and may be helpful in concussion recovery.

### How will I know if the student-athlete is symptom free and ready to begin the RTP Protocol?

Once a student-athlete is completely free of both documented clinical signs and symptoms at rest and classroom induced signs and symptoms (caused by cognitive stimulation such as reading, computer work, and schoolwork) a gradual Return-to-Play (RTP) progression can be started.

### Who can monitor the RTP Protocol?

LHCPs which includes the following individuals: Licensed Physician (MD/DO), Licensed Athletic Trainer (LAT), Licensed Physician Assistant (PA), Licensed Nurse Practitioner (NP), or Licensed Neuropsychologist who has examined the student-athlete can monitor the student-athlete. If one of these LHCPs is not accessible, the school’s first responder may monitor the RTP.

### How long is a stage?

The length of time for each stage is at least 24 hours.

### What activities are included in the RTP Protocol stages?

The RTP Protocol begins with light aerobic exercise designed only to increase your heart rate (e.g. stationary bicycle), then progresses to increasing heart rate with movement (e.g. running), then adds increased intensity and sport-specific movements requiring more levels of neuromuscular coordination and balance including non-contact drills and finally, full practice with controlled contact prior to final clearance to competition.

### How does the student-athlete know if he/she is ready to advance to the next stage?

After monitored completion of each stage without provocation/recurrence of signs and/or symptoms, a student-athlete is allowed to advance to the next stage of activity.

### What should the student-athlete do if signs and/or symptoms return?

If signs/symptoms occur with exercise, the student-athlete should stop and rest. Once free of signs/symptoms for 24 hours, the student-athlete returns to the previously completed stage of the protocol that was completed without recurrence of signs/symptoms and progresses forward in the protocol. During this process, it is important that student-athletes pay careful attention to note any return of concussion signs/symptoms (headache, dizziness, vision problems, lack of coordination, etc.) both during and/or in the minutes to hours after each stage. In the event that signs/symptoms are experienced, they should be reported to the individual monitoring the student-athlete’s RTP Protocol.

### What should be done if the student-athlete is unable to complete a stage successfully after two attempts?

If a student-athlete is unable to complete a stage twice without return of signs/symptoms, consultation with the treating LHCP who has examined the student-athlete is advised. A student-athlete should be progressed to the next stage only if he/she does NOT experience any signs/symptoms with the prior stage.

### How long should the completed RTP Protocol form be kept on file?

The completed RTP Protocol form should remain on file at least until the student-athlete graduates from high school.