Student Guidance:

When can I return to sports or work-outs after my COVID-19 infection?

Return to play or work-outs is determined by how sick you were when you had COVID-19

1. **Did you have Mild infection or NO symptoms at all?**

   Mild infection =

   - *less than* 4 days of a fever over 100.4F
   - *less than or equal to* 1 week of muscle aches, chills or fatigue symptoms
   - **NO** other concerning symptoms such as chest pain, feeling winded or short of breath that limited your physical activity, new heart skipping/palpitations or feeling dizzy or feeling you will pass out.

   What should you do?

   - Do NOT exercise for first 5 days of your COVID-19 infection
   - Recommend you wear mask for the full 10 days of COVID-19 infection, even if you feel better.
   - After you finished your 5-day isolation, you can return to play or work-out with gradual increase in your activity every 24 hours until return to unrestricted activity (*see protocol* below)
   - If at any time during your return to play or work-out protocol you develop chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, palpitations, then you should **stop exercising** and **schedule an appointment with a medical provider.**

2. **Did you have Moderate/Severe COVID illness/symptoms?**

   Moderate or severe infection =

   - 4 or more days of fever over 100.4F
   - 1 week or greater of muscle aches, chills or fatigue and/or pneumonia and/or hospital/emergency room visit or if you stayed overnight/admitted to the hospital.
   - Any concerning symptoms (during COVID or ongoing symptoms) of chest pain, feeling winded or short of breath that limited your physical activity, new heart skipping/palpitations or feeling dizzy or feeling you will pass out.

   What you need to do?

   - Do NOT exercise for first 5 days of your COVID-19 infection **AND** until you have a medical evaluation. Please call for an appointment.

- Recommend you wear a mask for the full 10 days of COVID-19 infection when you are around others, even if you feel better.
- *You will need an in-office medical evaluation after your 5-day isolation period and a note clearing you for physical activity. Call your home provider or student health center for appointment.*

Stages of Return to Play after COVID-19 infection

Advance to the next stage every 24-48 hours. If you develop symptoms at a specific stage, stop exercising at that level of intensity, decrease the stage and continue at that stage for 48-72 hours before increasing to the next stage. Call for medical evaluation with any persistent symptoms.

Stage I	Initial rest	Allow time for recovery	N/A	N/A	Activities of daily living.
Stage II	Light activity	Gradual increase in heart rate	<70%	<15 minutes	Begin light exercise (e.g., walking, light jogging, light stationary bicycle). No resistance training.
Stage III	Moderate activity	Increase in exercise frequency and duration	<80%	<45 minutes	More challenging aerobic activities (eg, 2- to 3-km run at 12 to 15 minutes/mile [7 to 9 minutes/km] or at easy pace for elite runners; stationary bicycle at 50 to 125 watts; other activity at RPE 9 to 12). Begin resistance training (eg, bodyweight exercises that can be performed for 15 to 20 repetitions without difficulty; weight training at 50% of 1RM or less).
Stage IV	Advanced activity	Increase in exercise intensity; restoration of functional skills	<80%	<60 minutes	More intense aerobic activities (eg, 3- to 5-km run at 10 to 15 minutes/mile [6 to 9 minutes/km] or at moderate but not fast pace for elite runners; stationary bicycle at >150 watts; other activity at RPE 11 to 14). More intense resistance training (eg, full bodyweight exercises; weight training at 70% of 1RM or less).

Stage V	Normal training	Gradual resumption of standard fitness routine	N/A	N/A	Normal training*. Re-introduction of sprints, interval training, and agility (multi-directional) training*. Full resistance training*.

The table above provides a general scheme for progressing to full play following infection with COVID-19. The duration of each stage will vary widely depending upon a range of patient factors, including severity of infection, comorbidities, age, baseline fitness, and goals. Clinicians must monitor patients appropriately and modify activity based on patient response and any symptoms or signs that may develop.

HR: heart rate; N/A: not applicable; 1RM: one repetition maximum; RPE: rate of perceived exertion.

* Training volume and intensity should be increased **gradually**. A good rule of thumb is that increases should not exceed 10% each week. For aerobic activities, increases in volume should precede increases in intensity.

References:

1. *Elliott N, Martin R, Heron N, et al. Infographic. Graduated return to play guidance following COVID-19 infection. Br J Sports Med 2020; 54:1174.*
2. *Metzl JD, McElheny K, Robinson JN,et al. Considerations for Return to Exercise Following Mild-to-Moderate COVID-19 in the Recreational Athlete. HSS J 2020; 16(Suppl 1):1.*
3. *Jewson J, McNamara A, Fitzpatrick J. Life after COVID-19: The importance of a safe return to physical activity. Aust J Gen Pract 2020; 49.*
4. *Coronavirus Disease 2019: Readiness Guide Version 2. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery 2021.*

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