## Return to learn guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of healing</th>
<th>Home activity</th>
<th>School activity</th>
<th>Physical activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Stage 1**—Your child still has many symptoms and problems | • Complete rest in a quiet room  
• Allow as much sleep as possible  
• Limit things that require your child to think, focus, reason or remember  
• Remove any electronics and computers from your child’s room  
• Remove any activity planners and “to-do” lists from your child’s room  
• Give your child plenty of fluids to drink  
• Feed your child small, frequent meals during the day and at bedtime  
• Give your child plenty of carbohydrates to eat, such as whole grain breads and cereals, pasta and rice | • Your child may not go to school. It is typical to rest for 24 to 48 hours and monitor if symptoms improve | See Stage 1 in next chart |
| **Stage 2**—Your child still has some symptoms and problems | • Stay in quiet rooms  
• Allow for enough sleep—at least eight hours  
• Allow your child to use TV, video games, texting, social media and email for a short time—fewer than two hours a day, for example, he might have 20 minutes of brain work followed by a one-hour brain break  
• Help your child to not stress over missed school work  
• Continue with fluids, small, frequent meals and carbohydrates, as in Stage 1  
• As your child has less symptoms, begin adding homework in short sittings to avoid falling behind | • Return to school for half days  
• Attend core classes only or have shortened class time  
• Rest in the nurse’s office between classes and as needed  
• Your child may not take tests or quizzes  
• Use preprinted class notes  
• Complete short homework assignments—work 20 minutes at a time with rest breaks in between  
• Talk with the school nurse or teacher about academic accommodations from your doctor, and create a plan  
• Avoid very loud noises, like music and noise in cafeterias, at PE and at recess | See Stage 2 in next chart |
| **Stage 3**—Your child’s symptoms and problems have gone away | • Slowly return to watching TV, playing video games and texting  
• Allow family interactions again  
• Continue with fluids, small, frequent meals and carbohydrates, as in Stage 1  | • Your child may gradually return to a full day of classes  
• He may need to schedule make-up work, tests and quizzes  
• He may take one test or quiz a day with extra time as needed, to complete  
• Tell the school nurse or teacher if any symptoms or problems return | See Stages 2-4 in next chart |
| **Stage 4**—Your child seems back to normal | • Your child may have near normal home and social interactions | • Your child may begin to complete past assignments to catch up on school work | See Stages 5 and 6 in next chart |
| **Stage 5**—Your child may return to full activities | • Your child may return to normal home and school interactions after five days of no symptoms | • Your child may return to normal school function without the need for extra accommodations or restrictions | See stage 7 in next chart |

This is general information and is not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the health of a child.

[choa.org/concussion](http://choa.org/concussion)

Concussion nurse: 404-785-KIDS (5437)
### Return to play and sports guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of healing</th>
<th>Activity allowed</th>
<th>Examples of sports</th>
<th>Examples of other activities</th>
<th>Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>• No activity • Complete cognitive and physical rest</td>
<td>• Complete physical rest</td>
<td>• Quiet time with rest • Avoid groups, videos, reading, computers, video games, cell phones, noisy places</td>
<td>• Brain rest and healing • BECOME FREE OF SYMPTOMS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Light aerobic activity</td>
<td>• 10-15 minutes of walking or stationary bike • Light sweat on the brow • Slight increase in breathing rate</td>
<td>• Walk in park or neighborhood • Avoid group activities</td>
<td>• Increase heart rate to 30 to 40 percent at most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Moderate aerobic activity • Light resistance training</td>
<td>• 20-30 minutes of jogging or stationary bike • Arm curls, shoulder raises, or leg lifts with weights that can be comfortably lifted • One set of 10 repetitions for each activity</td>
<td>• Supervised play • Low risk activities such as dribbling a ball, playing catch, changing directions, jumping, side-to-side slides, chasing a ball or catching a ball on the run</td>
<td>• Increase heart rate to 40 to 60 percent max • Add resistance • Use eyes to track objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Intense aerobic activity • Moderate resistance training • Sport-specific exercise</td>
<td>• 40-60 minutes of running or stationary bike • Same resistance exercises with weight for three sets of 10 reps • Pre-competition warm-up such as passing a soccer ball, throwing a football or doing ladder drills</td>
<td>• Supervised play • Moderate-risk activities, such as balance and agility drills • No head contact activities • Can sweat and breathe heavy</td>
<td>• Increase heart rate to 60 to 80 percent max • Increase resistance • Mimic the sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Controlled-contact training drills</td>
<td>• 60-90 minutes of time on the field, court or mat for specific drills • Take part in normal practice session • Contact that is normally part of the sport—only use items that &quot;do not hit back&quot; such as a sled in football • Recheck for symptoms or problems often</td>
<td>• Free play • Run and jump as able • Full return to PE • Recheck for symptoms or problems often</td>
<td>• Mimic the sport or free play without the risk of head injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>• Full-contact practice</td>
<td>• After OK from the doctor, may take part in normal training activities</td>
<td>• With parent or adult supervision, may take part in normal activities</td>
<td>• Build confidence • Assess skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>• Return to play</td>
<td>• Normal game play</td>
<td>• Normal playtime and activities</td>
<td>• No restrictions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maximum heart rate is determined by subtracting the athlete's age from 220 and multiplying by the percentage. For example:

- Your target or ideal heart rate for exercise during Stage 2 is usually 30 to 40 percent of your maximum heart rate.
- To find your maximum heart rate, subtract your age from 220. If you are 15 years old, subtract 15 from 220 = 205. Next, multiply that number by 30 and 40 percent. This will give you a target heart rate for exercise in Stage 2.
- 205 times 30 percent = 62 beats a minute.
- 205 times 40 percent = 82 beats a minute.
- This means that your target heart rate for exercise in Stage 2 is between 62 and 82 beats a minute.

- Allow 24 hours between each activity stage in the chart. This means that it will take at least seven days to return to full activity.
- For your child to move from one stage to the next, he must be able to do an activity at 100 percent without symptoms or problems for 24 hours.
- If any symptoms return, it means his brain is not ready for the next stage and he should drop back to the previous stage.
- Once your child has no symptoms again for 24 hours, he can try the activities in that stage again.


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In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.