Return to Academics

Phase 1: You have concussion symptoms. Rest your brain and your body!

- Engage in complete academic and physical rest until symptoms are gone. This may take a few days.
- Avoid class/lab, homework, reading, email, Facebook, texting, video games, computer work and physical activity/exertion. An exception is to use the concussion notification template – link to Parton Webpage – to notify your professors and your commons dean that you have a concussion.
- Consider putting an auto reply on your email and text message service that you will respond in a few days.
- Fight boredom by sleeping, watching very limited amounts of television, listening to podcasts, hanging out with friends or family in a quiet environment, talking short walks. Stop any of these activities if they make your symptoms worse.
- Students that exert themselves academically or physically during this phase tend to have a delayed recovery.
- Optimize your recovery by getting at least 8 hours of sleep/24 hours, drinking plenty of fluid, and eating regularly.

Phase 2: Your symptoms are 95-100% gone. Begin sub-symptom threshold recovery by doing academic work with frequent breaks unless you begin to have symptoms.

- **Classes:** Start by attending classes and simply trying to pay attention during the class. Do not take notes or actively participate. If your concussion symptoms start and are getting worse, it might be a good idea to excuse yourself and go home to rest. Resume going to class when your symptoms have resolved. Once you are able to attend a class or two without symptoms, it is time to advance to class participation. Taking notes and participating actively is OK unless your symptoms start, at which point you could either stop participation and simply attend the class, or politely excuse yourself. Some students will be able to attend or participate in some classes but not others due to factors such as the topic being studied of how the material is being presented (i.e. discussion vs slides). Some students find that they can only attend a couple of classes each day initially, which is OK. Avoid pushing through symptoms to attend or participate in class because that may be delaying your recovery.

- **Homework:** If you feel well, it is reasonable to go ahead and start doing some homework in small amounts. Start by trying some reading for up to 30 minutes, then stop and take a 10-15 minute break. During the break, close your eyes and rest, or maybe go for a short walk or get a snack. Avoid email, television, texting, etc. Some students will only be able to read for 15-20 minutes before they start getting concussion symptoms. If symptoms start, it’s time to stop doing homework and rest. Once you are feeling better, you can restart homework, but your goal interval is now the amount of time you were able to read before your symptoms started (i.e. 15-20 minutes). After that interval, take a short break. Eventually, as your brain recovers, you will be able to gradually increase the reading/study interval and need fewer breaks. Some students find that reading is easier than problem sets or studying languages, and for others the problem sets are easier. See what works best for you. Students that push through symptoms to complete homework assignments or study for exams tend to have longer recoveries.

Phase 3: Your symptoms are gone, you are attending and participating in all classes, and you can study and do homework without symptoms.

- Begin catching up on essential work and testing.
- Notify your professors and commons dean that you are ready to start making up any missed assignments or exams.
- Start preparing to resume physical activity.
- Call the Center for Teaching and Learning Resources (CTLR) for guidance in return to academic activities once your symptoms have resolved.

Continue to Return to Physical Activity on page 2.
Return to Physical Activity  (start Step 2 after you are comfortable in Phase 3 of the Return to Academics process)

Step 1: You have concussion symptoms. Rest your brain and your body!

Step 2: You are able to participate in all classes and do schoolwork. Begin light aerobic exercise.

- Start with walking, swimming or stationary cycling for 30 minutes at a light to moderate pace. You should not be out of breath and should be able to have a conversation. No resistance training/ weight lifting.
- Stop exercise if your concussion symptoms recur. Wait 24 hours before progressing to Step 3. Do not progress if you had any symptoms during or following Step 2. If symptoms did occur, drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress again after a further 24 hours period of rest has passed.

Step 3: You are able to participate in all classes and do schoolwork and light aerobic exercise without symptoms. Begin sport specific exercise.

- Start activities like skating drills in ice hockey, running drills in soccer or basketball. Increase aerobic exertion. No activities involving head impact or the risk of a collision or head impact. No resistance training/ weight lifting.
- Stop exercise if your concussion symptoms recur. Wait 24 hours before progressing to Step 4. Do not progress if you had any symptoms during or following Step 3. If symptoms did occur, drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress again after a further 24 hours period of rest has passed.

Step 4: You are able to participate in all classes and do schoolwork and perform sport specific exercise without symptoms. Begin non-contact training drills (if appropriate) and light weight lifting/ resistance exercise.

- Progress to more complex training drills (i.e. passing drills in football and ice hockey) and increased aerobic exertion. May start progressive resistance training/ weight lifting.
- Stop exercise if your concussion symptoms recur. Wait 24 hours before progressing to Step 5. Do not progress if you had any symptoms during or following Step 4. If symptoms did occur, drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress again after a further 24 hours period of rest has passed.
- Non-contact sport participants can gradually increase their activity levels, including competition and game participation as tolerated from here.
- Contact sport participants should be cleared for contact by the team physician or health center staff prior to progressing to Step 5.

Step 5: You are able to participate in all classes and do schoolwork and perform non-contact training drills and light weight lifting/ resistance exercise without symptoms. You have received clearance for contact by the team physician or health center staff. Begin full practices including full-contact training drills if appropriate.

- Progress to more complex training drills (i.e. passing drills in football and ice hockey) and increased aerobic exertion. May start progressive resistance training/ weight lifting.
- Stop exercise if your concussion symptoms recur. Wait 24 hours before progressing to Step 6. Do not progress if you had any symptoms during or following Step 5. If symptoms did occur, drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress again after a further 24 hours period of rest has passed.

Step 6: You are able to participate in all classes and do schoolwork and perform full practice and full-contact training drills and light weight lifting/ resistance exercise without symptoms. You have received clearance for contact activities by the team physician or health center staff. Resume normal game play

- Stop exercise and report symptoms if they recur. Do not progress or retry Step 6 without consulting the team physician.