



Important Decision for an Athlete After Injury

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Sports is dynamic and its popularity is now at steady increase. Sports is more about pride in all aspect for a country today. Winning and losing is a part of sport as much as an injury is. An athlete faces an injury during his tenure of game quite often. Injuries are part of sports and is inevitable. Injury usually takes few weeks to recover or may be months or can be seen as one or two in-season and off season with competitive season together when thinking in sports timeline. Therefore, post injury or rehab phase the most evident question is when to allow to return to sports? resuming the game again is what an athlete seeks the most and wish to have as soon as possible too.

Return to play is a complex decision as it has to pass through a team which involves individuals from the medical department, physiotherapist, coach, family of the athlete and athlete itself. Mental wellbeing of athlete and self-efficacy makes a significant contribution for the decision. As we must always remember that clinician is usually legally responsible for any consequences of the decision.

Also, the RTP (return to play) decision should be based on various factors taken together as it could lead to a tricky situation otherwise. The number of factors that are important are history of the injury, mechanism of the injury, type of injury, competitive level, type of activity and current psychological state. Nutrition and sleep are also important components before allowing return to play as it also decides injury load and team or individual performance.

Quicker and safe return to sports is to be the goal for a player and which is dependent on efficient rehabilitation.

Especially after the world has seen COVID ERA which has disturbed almost the whole world and undoubtedly athletes were not spared. Also post covid complications was the new thing we experience so for that also return to sports post covid guidelines need to be followed. Once you get asymptomatic and covid negative or 3 weeks post -acute infectious symptoms (Table 1).

Stage 1	15 minutes or less: 2 Days Minimum	Light activity (walking, jogging, stationary bike), intensity no greater than 70% of maximum heart rate. NO resistance training
Stage 2	30 minutes or less: 1 day	Add simple movement activities (e.g., running drills)-intensity no greater than 80% of maximum heart rate.
Stage 3	45 minutes or less: 1 day	Progress to more complex training-intensity no greater than 80% maximum heart rate.
Stage 4	60 minutes: 2 day	Normal training activity-intensity no greater than 80% maximum heart rate
Stage 5	60 minutes	Return to full activity/participation (i.e., contests/competitions)

Table 1: Adapted from Elliott N, et al, infographic, British Journal of Sports Medicine, 2020; copied from AAP Policy statement.

When dealing with musculoskeletal system, we need to develop the athlete for preinjury fitness levels for safest return to sports where components of strength, power, speed, endurance and metabolic and cardiovascular capacity are needed to be taken care of.

RTP guidelines are established which consists of some milestones and are dependent on type and severity of injury, demands of specific sports, affected body region [1].

Milestones that can help decision and prioritizing are: 1. clinical care - where baseline testing is done to know the performance deficits 2. Return to activity - where progression is made to general rehabilitation from the approval of clinician. here biological healing takes place in the time frame. 3. Return to sports - is a crucial phase as it is the initiation of sports specific rehabilitation and individualised training. 4. Return to play - unrestricted training and pre competition training is being done in this. 5. Return to competition - it is the ultimate goal and means first participation in the competition.

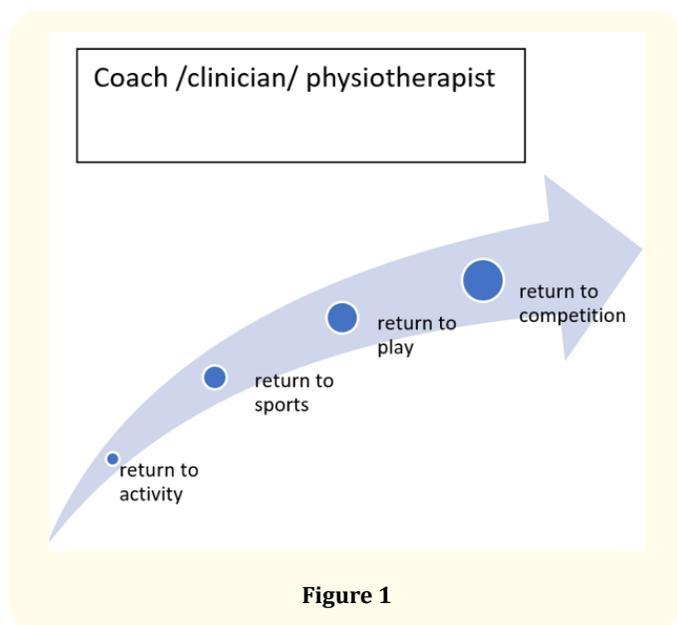


Figure 1

On the basis of physiology, ROM exercises will allow muscle recruitment and making the joint pain free as it has been observed that to start will isometric contractions tend to prepare the muscle. After pain-free range of motion, eccentric contractions should be introduced to provide greater morphological and neuromuscular adaptation. [2] Basic field work is moved to complex field work and then advanced skills with more challenging task being given to athlete.

Conclusion

Return to play should be well planned considering all the factors involved with participation of each and every team work for swift and safe return to sports.

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