

# Gradual Return to Play

Returning to play too soon following a concussive injury, even a bell ringer or a ding, can turn catastrophic. Therefore, once it is decided that an athlete is ready to return to play, coaches, parents, and athletes should follow a stepwise sequence to ensure the healing process is complete. Stepwise Return to Play calls for a gradual and systematic return to physical activity. If the athlete is able to complete the activity without the resurrection of symptoms or deterioration of brain function, he/she can graduate to the next step. If symptoms reappear at any step in the sequence, athletes are instructed to step back. Each successful step forward should be separated by at least 24 hours.



## STEPWISE RETURN TO PLAY

- 1 NO ACTIVITY.** Rest until asymptomatic.
- 2 Light aerobic exercise.**  
Examples: light jogging; stationary bike
- 3 Sport-specific exercise. No contact.**  
Examples: running, shooting on a side basket
- 4 Non-contact sport drills.**  
Example: full-speed agility drills
- 5 Full-contact sport drills.**  
Examples: tackling drills; scrimmage
- 6 Full activity.**  
No restrictions

**Each Step Up Must Be Separated by 24 Hours  
Do Not Advance to the Next Step if Symptoms Reappear**