



Return to Play Guide

Sherwood Park Minor Hockey Association is providing the following information pertaining to its Return to Play policy. While these six steps are commonly associated with returning from a concussion, these steps should be applied to any significant injuries. A Significant Injury is any injury that a player sustains that requires the player to be absent from hockey for a period of greater than one week. Examples are, but are not limited to, concussions, broken bones, severe sprains or strains, major lacerations, respiratory incidents, etc.

After a significant injury has occurred the *Team Safety Person/Trainer* with the injured player, parents/guardians and approved medical providers will determine the best course of action. The *Team Safety Person/Trainer* needs to be kept apprised of any changes in the player's condition, and the player should be considered unfit to play until assessed by an approved medical provider. No player should return to play until the appropriate written clearance has been provided as per the process and the Return to Play criteria has been met.

Return to Play Process

The return to play process is gradual, or as mandated by medical protocols and begins after a doctor has given the player clearance to return to activity and the SPMHA Safety Committee receives the clearance. If in the rehabilitation phase for return to play the player experiences any pain or symptoms, the player must be re-evaluated by a physician. Remember, symptoms may return later that day or the next, and not necessarily when exercising.

Step 1: No activity, only complete rest, as determined by the appropriate medical protocols. Proceed to step 2 as advised by health professionals

Step 2: Light aerobic exercise, such as walking or stationary cycling. Monitor for symptoms and signs. No resistance training or weightlifting

Step 3: Sport-specific activities and training (i.e. skating)

Step 4: Drills without body contact. May add light resistance training and progress to heavier weights. The time needed to progress from non-contact to contact exercise will vary with the severity of the injury and the player.

Step 5: Begin drills with body contact (Only proceed to step 5 after medical clearance is obtained)

Step 6: Game play. (The earliest a concussed athlete should return to play is one week)

Key Considerations

Players returning from injury should wear all protective equipment and wear a different colour jersey to identify themselves until fully recovered.

Players should proceed through the Return to Play steps only when they do not experience any pain or symptoms, and the physician has given clearance. Each step should be a minimum of one day.





Significant injuries happen and are as unique as individual players. **Never return to play if symptoms persist.**

After an extended leave, the player should practice before they play. The practice situation is a controlled setting that allows the player to gradually adapt, feel comfortable, and regain confidence without risking further injury. It also permits the player to regain conditioning and cardiovascular endurance before returning to game play. **A player is more at risk of injuring/re-injuring themselves because of a lack of conditioning.**

A player should not return to play unless they can demonstrate the appropriate skills in a practice situation. The goal is full function and a return to pre-injury fitness and skill level.

Please Note

If a player believes that they are being unfairly treated regarding the Return to Play process, they have a right to a second opinion.

In the unlikely event of contradictory medical opinion, SPMHA reserves the right to seek the professional recommendation of its *Safety Committee* professionals and other subject matter experts to provide guidance and an alternative Return to Play rehabilitation timeline and Clearance, as required.

SPMHA assumes no liability for a player returning to practice or game without a medical examination/clearance declaring the player is suitable to return to the ice.

All players, coaches, trainers, team personnel and parents must follow the SPMHA Return to Play process. This covers actions to be taken during an injury, along with the guidelines that must be followed for appropriate player recovery. The player's well-being is the primary focus and as such, it is MANDATORY that every team official review and understand the guideline.

