

CONCUSSION CLEARANCE PROCESS

COLORADO STATE LAW REQUIRES THAT ATHLETES AGES 11-19 HAVE CLEARANCE FROM THEIR CONCUSSION BEFORE RETURNING TO SPORTS. EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT IN A SPORT YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR CONCUSSION “CLEARED”.

You can begin the process towards concussion clearance when:

- Symptoms of concussion are gone (you feel like your normal self) and you are off all medications used to treat concussion symptoms.
- Your physical examination by your medical provider is normal.
- Your cognitive function (thinking and learning) is normal. Attending full school without concussion adjustments and cognitive testing in clinic that shows recovery.

When you have met the criteria to start the clearance process, you may be required to go through the Return to Sport (RTS) protocol.

- Return to Sports (RTS) is an exercise clearance protocol with steps that introduce gradual exercise prior to clearance.
- The RTS protocol is recommended by the International Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport. Typically, 4 steps of exercise are completed within a minimum of 4 days
 - Light Aerobic Activity – example: walking or stationary cycling at a slow to medium pace. Goal – Increased heart rate
 - Sports –Specific Activity – example: Running or skating drills. Goal – Add movement
 - Non-contact Training Drills – example: harder training drills such as passing drills, progressive resistance training. Goal – Exercise, coordination and increased thinking
 - Full practice – Goal – Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
- Once you finish these steps without any symptoms you will be given final clearance from your concussion.
- There are situations when we recommend a longer process for kids. These steps were designed for adult athletes. Kids may take more time to recover and return to their sports and activities.

For non-athletes or athletes in non-contact sports we also have the option of clearing a concussion by doing a treadmill test in our physical therapy program instead of the RTS steps. Depending on the situation, we sometimes use the treadmill test in combination with the RTS steps.