

## American Football following a concussion

American football is a **high-risk sport** for concussion because of:

- **High-speed collisions** in tackles and blocks.
- **Head-to-head and head-to-body contact** despite helmets.
- **Falls** with head impact on the ground.
- **Frequent sub-concussive impacts** during training and games.

Helmets reduce risk of skull fracture but **do not prevent concussion**. Because of this, players must follow a **strict, staged pathway** before returning. Special caution is needed as concussions often occur in **linemen (frequent head impacts), receivers (aerial contests), and running backs (high-speed tackles)**.

Earliest day post-injury	Notes	Activity
Day 8	Can start this stage even when still symptomatic but exercise should not significantly worsen symptoms.	<p><b>Low risk exercise &amp; training</b> Gradual increase in self-directed exercise (running, stationary bike, swimming) supervised weight training etc. Light resistance or body weight training. <i><b>Focus on fitness</b></i></p> <p><b>American Football specific exercise</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Position drills at walk/jog pace (routes, footwork, blocking stances).</li> <li>- Catching and passing in controlled drills.</li> <li>- Walk-through plays with no opposition.</li> <li>- Helmet optional — no pads yet.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R2P Medical Assessment</b> to assess fitness to start a Gradual Return to Sport</p>		
Day 15	Only if symptom free at rest for the preceding 14 days	<p><b>Gradual Return to American Football training</b></p> <p>Consider starting with reduced intensity sessions, building up as tolerated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full-speed position drills (routes, blocking footwork, QB dropbacks).</li> <li>- Small-sided tactical drills (7-on-7, no contact).</li> <li>- Play execution at speed with decision-making elements.</li> <li>- Helmets and pads allowed for acclimatisation, but no tackling or blocking.</li> </ul> <p><b>If remains well, progressing to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contact tackling and blocking drills.</li> <li>- Full scrimmages with full equipment.</li> <li>- Game-speed tactical play.</li> </ul>
<p><b>R2P Medical Assessment</b> to assess fitness to return to unrestricted sport</p>		
Day 21	Only if symptom free at rest for the preceding 14 days AND symptom	Return to full competitive American Football



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