

Equestrian following a concussion

Equestrian sports are a **high-risk category for concussion**. The main mechanisms include:

- **Falls from height** (off the horse).
- **Direct impact with the horse** (hooves, head, body).
- **Collisions with fences or obstacles** (particularly in show jumping, eventing, cross-country).
- **Ball/game play risks** (polo, mounted games) — combining speed, implements, and riding.

Concussions in equestrian athletes often occur alongside other injuries (fractures, soft tissue, spinal), so a **comprehensive medical assessment** is always required. Helmets reduce risk of skull fractures but **do not prevent concussion**.

Because control, balance, and reaction speed are vital to safe riding, athletes must follow a **strict RTS pathway**.

Earliest day post-injury	Notes	Activity
Day 8	Can start this stage even when still symptomatic but exercise should not significantly worsen symptoms.	<p>Low risk exercise & training Gradual increase in self-directed exercise (running, stationary bike, swimming) supervised weight training etc. Light resistance or body weight training. <i>Focus on fitness</i></p> <p>Equestrian specific exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ground-based skills (grooming, tacking up, walking horse in-hand). - Stationary mounting/dismounting practice. - Light flatwork riding (walk only → progress to trot). - Balance and posture drills in saddle at low intensity.
<p>R2P Medical Assessment 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>Gradual Return to Equestrian training</p> <p>Consider starting with reduced intensity sessions, building up as tolerated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flatwork at full pace (walk, trot, canter). - Controlled jumping reintroduction (low fences, simple lines). - Schooling sessions with transitions and tactical riding drills. - For polo/mounted games: controlled stick-and-ball work, no full play. <p>If remains well, progressing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full jumping and cross-country courses. - Supervised and controlled polo/mounted games with contact and speed. - Race riding (flat or jumps) at full intensity.
<p>R2P Medical Assessment 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 Equestrian



free during previous
stage

