

BC Cheerleading Association Return-to-Play

BCCA recommends following the Return-to-Play protocol. Each stage must be separated by at least 24 hours and the athlete must be completely symptom-free at each stage prior to progressing to the next stage. If symptoms are experienced at any stage, the athlete is to drop back to the previous stage for a period of 24 hours and be symptom-free at that stage prior to attempting the next stage again.

Each stage has listed what is allowed at home and in the gym. An athlete does not need to complete the previous “cheerleading specific” stage to process, merely the at home stage symptom free. Each stage includes the allowed skills of the stages prior.

Returning to practice or competition requires clearance from a CCMI practitioner or physician.

Stage 1 – Absolute Rest

Once the athlete has received a diagnosis of concussion from a certified CCMI practitioner or physician, the first step is *absolute* rest. During this phase, do not engage in physical or mentally stimulating activity (no reading, no texting, no TV/movies/video games or working on an electronic device). A brief 20-minute walk is permitted. The athlete may be advised to take time off work or school.

Athletes are not permitted to attend practice or competition.

Stage 2 – Light ‘Cognitive’ Activity

After the athlete is completely symptom free for a period of 24-hours with no mental stimulation, 30-45 minutes maximum of light reading, homework, watching TV etc. Even if no symptoms occur the athlete must stop after 45 minutes.

Athletes are not permitted to attend practice or competition.

Stage 3 – Half-Day with Modifications

The athlete is now permitted to attend a half-day of school or work with modifications. Typical school modifications include but are not limited to: no tests, no PE, no homework, no music class, with frequent breaks etc.

The athlete may also attend a practice and watch only.

Stage 4 – Full Day with Modifications

Full day attendance at school or work is permitted (for students no PE class).

The athlete may attend practice and work on light static stretching while watching training.

Stage 5 – Light Physical Activity

A physical exertion test is required at the local clinic. Please book this appointment in advance to ensure the athlete is seen at the appropriate times. This test will be 20-30 minutes of clinician supervised physical activity while heart rate and blood flow are monitored.

Stage 6 – Low Intensity

The athlete may participate in a modified practice without contact. The athlete is allowed to complete a 20-30 minute warm-up or cardio, any normal non-inverted conditioning (no burpees or plyometrics) and may participate in dance without any jumps or spinning.

This stage should be administered with your coach and list of suggested drills/restrictions can be found on the Concussion Tracker smartphone application.

Stage 7 – Non-Contact Practice

The athlete may participate in a modified practice without contact. Level 1 and 2 tumbling, all dance and jumps are now allowed.

At this stage, athletes are still NOT permitted to participate in any drills that involve contact or that have the chance for potential contact.

Stage 8 –Re-Testing of Baseline

An intensive physical exertion test takes place at the local CCMI clinic which challenges the athlete's cardiovascular system, balance and assesses readiness to return to competition. Upon successful completion of the "Blackhawks Protocol", the athlete will immediately undergo full re-testing of all baseline-testing parameters (if they have a pre-injury baseline) to assess every area of neurological functioning and determine if the athlete has reached full brain recovery.

If the athlete successfully completes this they are cleared immediately for stage 9 (24 hour wait time does not apply).

If not working with a CCMI clinic: the athlete may participate in 60 minute of practice with non-release or inverted building skills. All dismounts should bump down. No pyramids are allowed. Level 3 and 4 tumbling is permitted with longer breaks between passes.

If the athlete has a baseline test they should be tested against their baseline at this point. If the athlete does not have a baseline they need to return to their physician and obtain written verification that they are cleared to participate fully.

Stage 9 – Full Practice

The athlete may participate fully in practice.

Stage 10 – Completion Ready

The athlete is cleared and may participate in competition.