

# RETURN TO WORK PROTOCOL



*The goal of this program is to provide guidance to patients and employers for any person that has sustained a concussion as the management of the concussion will impact the person's ability to return to work. For the purpose of these protocols, work has been divided into two categories, Sedentary/Light Physical Demand Jobs and Moderate/Heavy/Very Heavy Physical Demand Jobs. The distinction is made as the physical and mental requirements of positions fitting into these categories is different and the protocols must adjust to the work requirements. The protocols should be used as guidance when making recommendations for a return to work program to the patient and their employer.*

Sedentary or Light Physical Demand Jobs* (Typically “white collar” office-based jobs)		Symptom Free for Next 24 Hours?
<b>1</b>	<b>Stage 1 – Complete physical and cognitive rest</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. No work and at home patient should limit cell phone usage, no video games, limited TV or computer time (less than 30 minutes per day)</li> <li>b. Typically, should not exceed 2-3 days</li> </ol>	<b>YES:</b> Begin Stage 2 <b>NO:</b> Continue Resting
<b>2</b>	<b>Stage 2 – Day at work not to exceed 4 hours per day</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Computer work and/or projects should not exceed 45 minutes at a time</li> <li>b. Breaks after each work period for 15 minutes</li> <li>c. New projects with deadlines should not be assigned to worker</li> <li>d. Existing projects with deadlines should be reassigned to other employees</li> <li>e. No driving of company vehicle</li> <li>f. No business travel.</li> <li>g. Stage 2 restrictions for moderate, heavy or very heavy physical demand jobs apply as well if performed as an essential job function</li> </ol>	<b>YES:</b> Begin Stage 3 <b>NO:</b> Rest further until symptom free
<b>3</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Full day at work</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Computer work and/or projects should not exceed 90 minutes at a time</li> <li>b. Two 15-minute breaks during the course of the day</li> <li>c. Project assignment may resume</li> <li>d. Existing projects may be assigned back to patient, but deadlines may need to be extended</li> <li>e. No business travel.</li> <li>f. May drive company vehicle up to 30 minutes at a time for a total of 4 hours per day</li> <li>g. Stage 3 restrictions for moderate, heavy or very heavy physical demand jobs apply as well if performed as an essential job function</li> </ol>	<b>YES:</b> Move to Stage 4 <b>NO:</b> Return to Stage 2 until symptom free
<b>4</b>	<b>Stage 4 – Resume normal activities</b>	<b>YES:</b> Return to Work <b>NO:</b> Return to Stage 3 until symptom free

Reference: Consensus Statement on Concussion in Sport: the 3rd International Conference on Concussion in Sport held in Zurich (2008), Br J of Sports Med 2009; 43: i76-i84 doi:10.1136/bjism.2009.058248



Moderate, Heavy or Very Heavy Physical Demand Jobs* (Typically “blue collar” labor-type jobs but may have an office-based component as well)		Symptom Free for Next 24 Hours?
<b>1</b>	<b>Stage 1 – complete physical and cognitive rest</b> a. No work and at home patient should limit cell phone usage, no video games, limited TV or computer time (less than 30 minutes per day) b. Typically, should not exceed 2-3 days	<b>YES:</b> Begin Stage 2  <b>NO:</b> Continue Resting
<b>2</b>	<b>Stage 2 – 1/2 day at work not to exceed 4 hours per day</b> a. Activities not to exceed 45 minutes at a time with 15-minute rest periods in-between b. Light physical exertion is possible if no symptoms triggered. a. Avoid loud sounds Avoid loud sounds (avoid sounds with intensity greater than 75 decibels), no activities requiring balancing, use of power tools, and no operating heavy machinery, no operating company vehicle, no work in safety sensitive activities, no climbing ladders or working at heights, no wearing a respirator, no running or jumping. c. Stage 2 restrictions for sedentary and light physical demands jobs apply as well if performed as an essential job function	<b>YES:</b> Begin Stage 3  <b>NO:</b> Rest further until symptom free
<b>3</b>	<b>Stage 3 – Full day at work</b> a. Activities not to exceed 90 minutes at a time with two 15-minute rest periods per day b. Moderate exertion is possible if no symptoms triggered c. May drive company vehicle or operate heavy machinery up to 30 minutes at a time for a total of 4 hours per day d. Stage 3 restrictions for sedentary and light physical demand jobs apply as well if performed as an essential job function	<b>YES:</b> Move to Stage 4  <b>NO:</b> Return to Stage 2 until symptom free
<b>4</b>	<b>Stage 4 – Resume normal activities</b>	<b>YES:</b> Return to Work  <b>NO:</b> Return to Stage 3 until symptom free

## Concussion Symptoms

Physical		Thinking	Emotional	Sleep
Headaches	Numbness/ Tingling	Feeling mentally foggy	Irritability	Drowsiness
Sensitivity to light	Visual problems	Problems concentrating	Sadness	Sleeping more than usual
Nausea	Vomiting	Problems remembering	Feeling more emotional	Sleeping less than usual
Sensitivity to noise	Balance Problems	Feeling more slowed down	Nervousness	Trouble falling asleep
Fatigue	Dizziness			

**\* SEDENTARY WORK** – Exerting up to 10 pounds of force occasionally (Occasionally: activity or condition exists up to 1/3 of the time) and/or a negligible amount of force frequently (Frequently: activity or condition exists from 1/3 to 2/3 of the time) to lift, carry, push, pull, or otherwise move objects, including the human body. Sedentary work involves sitting most of the time, but may involve walking or standing for brief periods of time. Jobs are sedentary if walking and standing are required only occasionally and all other sedentary criteria are met.

**LIGHT WORK** – Exerting up to 20 pounds of force occasionally, and/or up to 10 pounds of force frequently, and/or a negligible amount of force constantly (Constantly: activity or condition exists 2/3 or more of the time) to move objects. Physical demand requirements are in excess of those for Sedentary Work. Even though the weight lifted may be only a negligible amount, a job should be rated Light Work: (1) when it requires walking or standing to a significant degree; or (2) when it requires sitting most of the time but entails pushing and/or pulling of arm or leg controls; and/or (3) when the job requires working at a production rate pace entailing the constant pushing and/or pulling of materials even though the weight of those materials is negligible.

**MEDIUM WORK** – Exerting 20 to 50 pounds of force occasionally, and/or 10 to 25 pounds of force frequently, and/or greater than negligible up to 10 pounds of force constantly to move objects. Physical Demand requirements are in excess of those for Light Work.

**HEAVY WORK** – Exerting 50 to 100 pounds of force occasionally, and/or 25 to 50 pounds of force frequently, and/or 10 to 20 pounds of force constantly to move objects. Physical Demand requirements are in excess of those for Medium Work.

**VERY HEAVY WORK** – Exerting in excess of 100 pounds of force occasionally, and/or in excess of 50 pounds of force frequently, and/or in excess of 20 pounds of force constantly to move objects. Physical demand requirements are in excess of those for Heavy Work.