

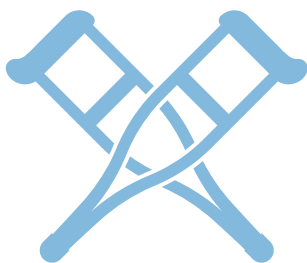


Unfortunately, injuries are an inevitable part of sports. The WIAA states “to resume participation following an illness and/or injury serious enough to require medical care by a medical authority licensed to perform a physical examination, a participating student must present to the school officials a written release from a medical authority licensed to perform physical examinations as listed in 17.11.2 and/or a dentist as applicable” as per Rule 17.11.4. Those licensed to perform physical examinations via the WIAA are: Medical Doctors (MD), Doctors of Osteopathy (DO), Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNP) Physician’s Assistants (PA) and Naturopathic Physicians.

As allied health professionals, athletic trainers can help determine severity of injuries and when athletes can safely return to sports. Many factors play a role in the decision to return an athlete to play safely and minimize the risk for reinjury. Although there is no universal formula to use for all injuries and the process of return to play, there are some common themes that Athletic Trainers use in their decision-making process. Some of those themes are the overall health status of the athlete, the participation risk, and other influences that can modify a decision (such as timing of the injury and part of the season).

General Guidelines

- 1** Athlete should have full unrestricted range of motion of injured area when compared bilaterally.
- 2** Athlete should have full unrestricted strength of injured area, compared bilaterally.
- 3** Athlete should have minimal to no pain while performing functional aspects of the respective sport.
- 4** Athlete should have minimal to no swelling in the area of the injury site.
- 5** Athlete and parents/guardian should be made aware of the risks of returning to sport in relation to the injury.
- 6** Athlete should be able to pass a series of functional exercises and movements based on the sport and position.



STEP 1

EVALUATION OF HEALTH STATUS

- Patient demographics
- Symptoms (pain, clicking)
- Personal Medical History (recurrent injury)
- Physical exam findings (swelling, discoloration, instability)
- Diagnostic imaging/lab tests (x-ray, MRI, blood tests)
- Functional testing (hop test, movement screens)
- Psychological state (anxiety, depressed)
- Seriousness of injury (concussion vs contusion)

STEP 2

EVALUATION OF PARTICIPATION RISK

- Type of Sport (contact vs non-contact)
- Position for sport
- Limb dominance
- Competitive Level (recreational vs professional)
- Ability to protect injury (padding, taping, bracing)

STEP 3

DECISION MODIFIERS

- Timing and Season (off-season, pre-season, post-season)
- Pressure from athlete (willingness to compete)
- External pressure (organization, coach, parents)
- Masking of injury by athlete
- Fear of litigation (if restricted or permitted)

* Table Referenced from: [2016 Consensus statement on return to sport from the First World Congress in Sports Physical Therapy, BJSM2016 Jul;50(14):853-64] AND [Return-to-Participation Considerations following Sports Injury, NFHS 2015 Nov]