

# Return to Sport: Readiness Checklist

*A printable readiness checklist for returning to sport after injury - pain response, strength, function and confidence - with the stages to progress through safely.*

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## At a Glance

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- Returning to sport is earned by criteria, not a calendar date
- Use this checklist with your physiotherapist, not instead of one
- If symptoms climb, step back one stage rather than pushing through

## Readiness Checklist

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- ■ Pain stays low and settles within a day of activity
- ■ No swelling appears or climbs after sessions
- ■ Strength is roughly 90% of the other side
- ■ Single-leg balance, hops and landings feel controlled
- ■ Sport-specific movements (cutting, throwing, sprinting) are pain-free
- ■ You can train without fear of the injury
- ■ Your clinician agrees you meet the progression criteria

## The Four Questions

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1. Does the injured area tolerate the load?
2. Is strength and function close to the other side?
3. Can you move with quality and control?
4. Do you feel confident?

If you can't answer yes to all four, you are not ready to progress.

## The Progression

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### Stage 1 - Symptom-limited loading:

- Rehab exercises, walking, cycling and light strengthening

### Stage 2 - Light sport-specific movement:

- Jogging, light drills, basic throwing or swimming

### Stage 3 - Controlled practice:

- Sport movements at 50-70% speed, adding one variable at a time

### Stage 4 - Full training:

- Full practice sessions; check how the area feels the next morning

### Stage 5 - Competition:

- Ease back in with reduced minutes or a modified role first

## When You're Not Ready

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- Pain that climbs during or after activity
- Swelling that appears or worsens after sessions
- A strength gap that won't close despite consistent training
- Repeated giving-way or instability
- Constant fear or guarding that doesn't improve

## References

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1. Ardern CL, et al. "2016 Consensus statement on return to sport from the First World Congress in Sports Physical Therapy, Bern." Br J Sports Med. 2016;50(14):853-864.
2. Grindem H, et al. "Simple decision rules can reduce reinjury risk by 84% after ACL reconstruction." Br J Sports Med. 2016;50(13):804-808.

***This information is for education only and is not a medical diagnosis.** Return-to-sport decisions should be made with your physiotherapist, surgeon or sports medicine clinician based on your individual response.*