

**When to Return to Sport**  
**Celebration News Article**  
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*March 5, 2007 - Most athletes will become injured at some point. Unfortunately, this not only causes discomfort for the athlete but also results in time off from his or her sport. So when is a person ready to resume play? The answer to that question depends on several factors, such as the duration of the injury, recurrence of the injury, fitness level of the athlete, presence of any other injuries, and type of sport. Injuries which have been present for a long time and recurrent injuries typically involve a longer recovery period. A low fitness level and the presence of another injury may also slow the recuperation time. Finally, a high-impact and physically demanding sport will require a more complete recovery prior to participation than would be necessary for a low demand sport.*

*It is important to resist the pressure to return to play before an injury is healed. Putting further stress on an injury may worsen the damage, prolong the overall recovery time, or cause injury to another area. In general, an athlete should not begin play until pain and/or swelling has subsided, range of motion of an injured joint is normal, and strength has returned. Consultation with a health care professional should be sought if an athlete is unsure of the severity of an injury or needs advice on returning to a sport.*

*Once an athlete is ready to get back to sport it is important to prevent re-injury. Prior to play, an adequate warm-up should be performed. This typically consists of light cardiovascular exercise to increase blood flow to the limbs and increase tissue temperature. Once this is complete, stretching is important to increase flexibility. A gradual approach to sports participation will help an athlete determine his or her readiness to play. It is also prudent to stretch after exercise and use ice for 15-20 minutes to reduce swelling if necessary.*

*Sports injuries are common and can be very frustrating. It is important to recognize the severity of an injury and act accordingly. Adequate time off followed by a gradual return to play will optimize recovery. Following the above guidelines will help an athlete overcome injury and get back to sport.*