



# RETURN TO SPORT GUIDE AFTER ANY ACUTE RESPIRATORY INFECTION, INCLUDING COVID-19

Knowledge about the effects of an acute respiratory infection, particularly COVID-19, on the exercising individual is limited. There are a wide variety of possible effects that a recent respiratory infection may have on several body functions and organs (not just the respiratory system), based on which pathogen (“bug”) caused the infection, and how severe it was. This guide is designed so that you can take extra care as you return to sport after symptoms of a respiratory illness, presumed to be an infection. This guide can assist you as you make decisions as you return to training after the infection if you 1) tested positive for COVID-19 WITHOUT experiencing any symptoms, 2) had a respiratory infection that was not caused by the COVID-19 virus (SARS-CoV-2), or 3) were not tested for COVID-19.

*As current scientific data on particular COVID-19 return to sport guides are not available at present, the following stepwise approach is suggested. As new information becomes available, this guide will be updated. (Last update: 15 July 2020)*

This stepwise guide is designed to make sure that you progress GRADUALLY, and to:

- 1. Help you to monitor any symptoms that may indicate your body might not be ready for a certain training load,
- 2. Limit the risk of injury after a period of de-training/rest.

## STEP 1: HOW SEVERE WAS YOUR INFECTION?

In order to give you some guidance on resuming your training, please start by choosing one of the following options that **best describes** the severity of your recent respiratory infection, **INCLUDING COVID-19**. This is based on 1) your **SYMPTOMS (TYPE and SEVERITY)**, 2) other **CO-MORBIDITIES** (diseases or conditions that have been associated with a higher risk of severe infection), and 3) the type and duration of **MEDICATION** or **TREATMENT** that you needed.

### 1: MILD INFECTION

- 1. **Symptoms:** COVID-19 positive but without symptoms **OR** mild symptoms of **short duration** (<5 days) **only** in the **nose, throat / sinuses**  
**OR**
- 2. **Co-morbidities:** **No co-morbidities** (e.g. moderate/severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart conditions, chronic kidney disease etc.)  
**OR**
- 3. **Medication/treatment:** No medication was needed **OR** only medication to treat symptoms for a short period (<5 days)

### 2: MODERATE INFECTION

- 1. **Symptoms:** Moderate or more severe and/or longer duration (5-10 days) symptoms in the **nose, throat / sinuses** **OR** any chest / general body symptoms (e.g. fever, chills, severe cough, chest pains, body aches, excessive tiredness, vomiting, diarrhoea, etc.)  
**OR**
- 2. **Co-morbidities:** Any mild symptoms with co-morbidities (e.g. moderate/severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart conditions, chronic kidney disease etc.)  
**OR**
- 3. **Medication/treatment:** Used medication to treat symptoms (5-10 days) and / or needed antibiotics or antiviral medication

### 3: SEVERE INFECTION

- 1. **Symptoms:** Any severe symptoms and/or long duration (>10 days) symptoms in the **nose, throat / sinuses** **OR** chest / general body symptoms (e.g. fever, chills, severe cough, chest pains, body aches, excessive tiredness, vomiting, diarrhoea, etc.)  
**OR**
- 2. **Co-morbidities:** Any moderate symptoms with co-morbidities (e.g. moderate/severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, heart conditions, chronic kidney disease etc.)  
**OR**
- 3. **Medication/treatment:** Used medication to treat symptoms (>10 days) (including antibiotics or antiviral medication) **OR** treatment in hospital

# STEP 2: A CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU START TRAINING

| 1: MILD INFECTION CHECKLIST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2: MODERATE INFECTION CHECKLIST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 3: SEVERE INFECTION CHECKLIST                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)</b><br/>Suggested that you make contact with your doctor and discuss resuming training.</p> <p><b>WHEN TO START TRAINING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only after 10 days of rest since the day of onset of symptoms (or the date of your positive COVID-19 test if you had no symptoms)</li></ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No symptoms in the <u>Symptom Checklist</u> (see below)</li></ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.</li></ul> | <p><b>MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)</b><br/>Essential. Please consult your doctor for a medical assessment before resuming training.</p> <p><b>WHEN TO START TRAINING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only after 10 days of rest since the day of onset of symptoms or the date of your COVID-19 positive test</li></ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>7 days without symptoms in the <u>Symptom Checklist</u> (see below)<br/><i>E.g. 4 days with symptoms + 7 days without symptoms = start training after 11 days.</i></li></ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.</li></ul> | <p><b>MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)</b><br/>Essential. Please consult your doctor for a medical assessment before resuming training.</p> <p><b>WHEN TO START TRAINING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only after 14 days without symptoms in the <u>Symptom Checklist</u> (see below). This applies to all respiratory infections, including COVID-19 positive or negative.</li></ul> <p>AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.</li></ul> |

## SYMPTOM CHECKLIST BEFORE STARTING TO TRAIN

Please consult your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:

|                                     |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Fever (>38°C/100.4°F) or chills     | Excessive fatigue / tiredness                   |
| Severe cough                        | Diarrhoea and/or vomiting                       |
| Excessive shortness breath          | General body aches and pains (moderate/ severe) |
| Chest pain, discomfort or tightness | Dizziness                                       |
| Racing heart beats                  | Balance / coordination problems                 |
| High resting heart rate (if known)  | Severe headache                                 |

# STEP 3: STARTING AND PROGRESSING YOUR TRAINING

Once you start training, it is recommended that you **monitor** your symptoms daily, how hard you are training (using heart rate and rating of perceived exertion), and progress gradually using the stepwise diagram provided on the following page.

When monitoring your symptoms **during training**, please use the following checklist:

## SYMPTOM CHECKLIST DURING TRAINING\*

Please STOP training & consult your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms when you are training:

|                                                       |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Abnormal breathlessness                               | Irregular heart rate                            |
| Chest pain, discomfort or tightness                   | Excessive fatigue                               |
| Abnormal high heart rate / racing heart               | Balance / coordination problems                 |
| Dizziness, fainting or near fainting while exercising | General body aches and pains (moderate/ severe) |
| Any other unusual symptoms during exercise            | Not adapting to training as expected            |



1: MILD INFECTION  
PROGRESSION OF TRAINING

- Complete each level of training in the stepwise diagram for a minimum of 3 days before moving on to the next level
- Rest every 3<sup>rd</sup> day
- Monitor symptoms during training

2: MODERATE INFECTION  
PROGRESSION OF TRAINING

- Complete each level of training in the stepwise diagram for a minimum of 6 days before moving on to the next level
- Rest every 3<sup>rd</sup> day
- Monitor symptoms during training

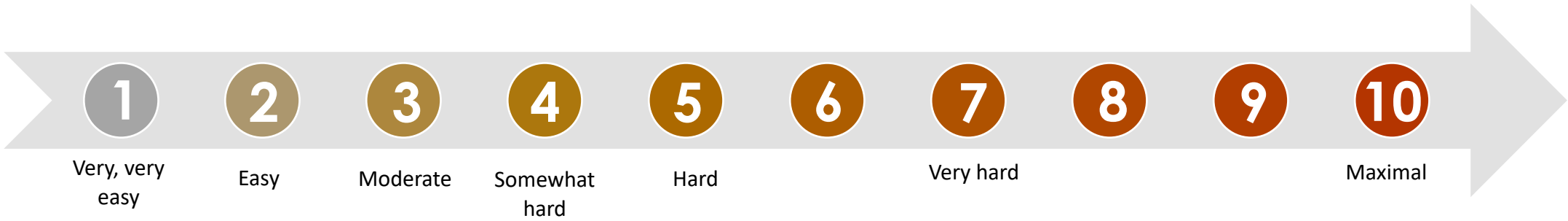
3: SEVERE INFECTION  
PROGRESSION OF TRAINING

- Complete each level of training in the stepwise diagram for a minimum of 6 days before moving on to the next level
- Rest every 3<sup>rd</sup> day
- Monitor symptoms during training

For all groups, use the stepwise diagram below to help you progress your training from Level 1 (starting to train again), to Level 5 (full training). The diagram indicates the suggested type of activity you should do, how long you should train for, how hard (measured by heart rate and RPE) you should train in each level, and what you should monitor during training.

**RPE (Rating of Perceived Exertion) and HR (heart rate)** are used to indicate **how HARD you should be training** in each level.

RPE refers to **how hard you FEEL a training session is**, on a scale of 1 to 10



Your heart rate reserve (HRR) is used to calculate your target HR as this method considers your resting HR. Max HR = 220 – age.

**Target Heart Rate = [(max HR – resting HR) × target zone %] + resting HR**

*E.g. Max HR: 220 – 32 (age) = 188 bpm. Resting HR: 60 bpm. Target HR: [(188 – 60) x 60%] + 60 = 137 bpm.*

The calculator below can be used to easily work out your target HR if you are viewing this document in Adobe on your computer.

Please type in your age, resting HR and the target HR zone:

| Age:    | Resting HR:                                                                                      | Target HR Zone (%):       | Your target HR:                        |                                |                                                                              |                                                                  |
|---------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | ACTIVITY                                                                                         | DURATION                  | RPE                                    | HEART RATE                     | MONITOR                                                                      | PROGRESS                                                         |
| LEVEL 1 | Light aerobic exercise. Avoid power/ explosive/ resistance training                              | 15–20 mins per day        | RPE 2–3<br>Session feels easy          | Up to 60% target HR zone       | Heart rate<br>Symptoms*<br>RPE                                               | Min no of days, no symptoms & exercise well tolerated            |
| LEVEL 2 | Moderate aerobic exercise/ simple movement activity. Avoid power/ explosive/ resistance training | 20–30 mins per day        | RPE 3–4<br>Session feels moderate      | Up to 70% target HR zone       | Heart rate<br>Symptoms*<br>RPE                                               | Min no of days, no symptoms & exercise well tolerated            |
| LEVEL 3 | More complex movement activities/ skills. Light resistance training                              | 30–45 mins per day        | RPE 4–5<br>Session feels somewhat hard | Up to 80% target HR zone       | Heart rate<br>Symptoms*<br>RPE<br>Excessive soreness (injury risk)           | Min no of days, no symptoms, exercise well tolerated & no injury |
| LEVEL 4 | Sport specific drills/ complex training activities. Moderate resistance training                 | 45–60 mins per day        | RPE 5–6<br>Session feels hard          | Up to 80% target HR zone       | Heart rate<br>Symptoms*<br>RPE<br>Excessive soreness (injury risk), recovery | Min no of days, no symptoms, exercise well tolerated & no injury |
| LEVEL 5 | Normal training                                                                                  | Normal volume of training | Any RPE                                | Up to normal training capacity | Heart rate<br>Symptoms*<br>RPE<br>Indication of injury                       | Ensure adequate rest & recovery                                  |