SEMLI
Sport, Exercise Medicine & Lifestyle Institute

with collaborators & partners

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 in making 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. heart / lung conditions, moderate / severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, 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** 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. heart / lung conditions, moderate / severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, 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: Severe** and/or **longer 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. heart / lung conditions, moderate / severe asthma, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, chronic kidney disease etc.)

OR

3. **Medication/treatment:** Used medication to treat symptoms (>10 days) (including antibiotics or antiviral medication) **OR** treatment in hospital

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STEP 2: A CHECKLIST BEFORE YOU START TRAINING

1: MILD INFECTION CHECKLIST

MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)

Suggested that you make contact with your doctor and discuss resuming training.

WHEN TO START TRAINING

- **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)

AND

- No symptoms in the Symptom Checklist (see below)

E.g. 3 days with symptoms + 7 days of rest with no symptoms = start training after 10 days.

AND

- No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.

2: MODERATE INFECTION CHECKLIST

MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)

Essential. Please consult your doctor for a medical assessment before resuming training.

WHEN TO START TRAINING

- **Only after 10 days of rest** since the day of onset of symptoms or the date of your COVID-19 positive test

AND

- **7 days without symptoms** in the Symptom Checklist (see below)

E.g. 5 days with symptoms + 7 days without symptoms = start training after 12 days.

AND

- No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.

3: SEVERE INFECTION CHECKLIST

MEDICAL CLEARANCE (by doctor)

Essential. Please consult your doctor for a medical assessment before resuming training.

WHEN TO START TRAINING

- **Only after 14 days without symptoms** in the Symptom Checklist (see below). This applies to all respiratory infections, including COVID-19 positive or negative.

AND

- No medication still being used to treat any symptoms.

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
- Severe cough
- Excessive shortness breath
- Chest pain, discomfort or tightness
- Racing / irregular heart beats
- High resting heart rate (if known)
- Excessive fatigue / tiredness
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- General body aches and pains (moderate/ severe)
- Dizziness
- Balance / coordination problems
- 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
- Chest pain, discomfort or tightness
- Abnormal high heart rate / racing heart
- Dizziness, fainting or near fainting while exercising
- Any other unusual symptoms during exercise
- Irregular heart rate
- Excessive fatigue
- Balance / coordination problems
- General body aches and pains (moderate/ severe)
- Not adapting to training as expected

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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 3rd 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 3rd day
- Monitor symptoms during training

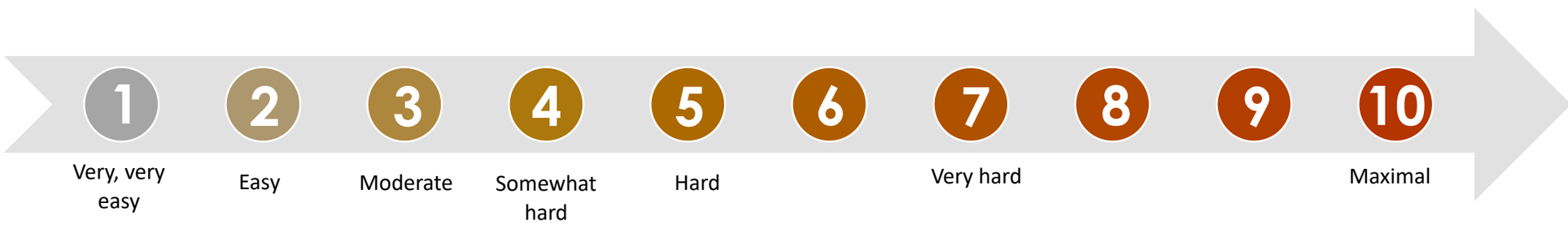
3: SEVERE INFECTION PROGRESSION OF TRAINING

- Complete each level of training in the stepwise diagram for a minimum of 6 days before moving on to the next level
- Rest every 3rd 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 below to calculate your target HR:

Age: ____ Resting HR: ____ Target HR Zone (%): ____ **Your target HR:** 0

	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 Session feels easy	Up to 60% target HR zone	Heart rate Symptoms* 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 Session feels moderate	Up to 70% target HR zone	Heart rate Symptoms* 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 Session feels somewhat hard	Up to 80% target HR zone	Heart rate Symptoms* RPE	Min no of days, no symptoms, & exercise well tolerated
LEVEL 4	Sport specific drills/ complex training activities. Moderate resistance training	45–60 mins per day	RPE 5–6 Session feels hard	Up to 80% target HR zone	Heart rate Symptoms* RPE	Min no of days, no symptoms, & exercise well tolerated
LEVEL 5	Normal training	Normal volume of training	Any RPE	Up to normal training capacity	Heart rate Symptoms* RPE	Ensure adequate rest & recovery

NOTE: Also monitor for excessive muscle soreness and pain as a possible early indicator of an injury as you progress through the levels of training.

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