

# Return to Sport

Phase 4 ACL rehab should be highly individualised, and exercises and training activities that are usual for the athlete when not injured should be integrated into the regime.

Focus should not only be on getting the knee ready for sport, but the whole person. The knee needs to be stable and strong, with optimal neuromuscular patterning and biomechanics. But the athlete needs to be confident and mentally ready to return to sport, and this will come from repetition of successful training and match play situations.

A background of strength, balance, landing, and agility work needs to be done during this phase (and continue on into Phase 5), but the emphasis of Phase 4 ACL rehab is on progressive training, from restricted to unrestricted, and an eventual return to competition when ready.

So when are people ready to return to sport after an ACL reconstruction?

Current research suggests a minimum of 9 months, however please be guided by your surgeon and sports medicine team. Our suggestion is to allow people back to sport if they have satisfied 3 key criteria:

- Successful completion of the Melbourne Return to Sport Score (>95)
- The athlete is comfortable, confident, and eager to return to sport, as measured by the ACL-RSI and IKDC
- An ACL injury prevention program is discussed, implemented, and continued whilst the athlete is participating in sport. To lower the risk of future injury, evidence supports that injury prevention programs are performed at least 15mins prior to each training session and game.



## Phase 4

Return to Sport

### Return to sport criteria



**95 + on  
Melbourne Return  
to Sport Score**



**Athlete is  
comfortable,  
confident,  
and eager to  
return to  
sport**



**ACL injury  
prevention  
program  
implemented**

