

LIGHT AEROBIC EXERCISE FOLLOWING A CONCUSSION

Participating in physical activity following a concussion has been shown to significantly lower the risk of developing persistent post-concussion symptoms and speed up overall recovery. Exertion therapy has also been shown to reduce anxiety, improve stress management, reduce fatigue, improve cognitive functioning, promote healing and increases cardiovascular health. Prolonged rest can actually increase fatigue, affect mood, lead to physiologic deconditioning and delay recovery. It is recommended that 48-72 hours after the onset of the concussion daily light aerobic exercise is performed until formal exertion testing is performed by a health care provider.

The American College of Sports Medicine defines light aerobic exercise as working between 50-63% of your max HR or 11/20 on the RPE scale (shown on the back). This can be described as comfortable activity with an increased respiration rate but you can easily carry on a conversation.

Max HR calculation: $220 - \text{Age} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$

Max HR x 0.50 = 50% max HR

Max HR x 0.63 = 63% max HR

EXAMPLES OF LIGHT AEROBIC EXERCISE

- **Stationary bike**
 - Typically tolerated best because there is no motion of the head
 - Performing exercise in a busy environment like at a gym or in front of the TV can also trigger symptoms for many people. If this happens, try closing your eyes and take note if this changes any symptoms.
- **Walking/elliptical**
 - If the vestibular system is involved the up and down motion of these exercises may cause an increase in symptoms
- **Swimming**
 - If the cervical spine is affected side to side motion of the head may not be tolerated
 - Modifying strokes like breast stroke to keep your head above the water or simply moving around in the pool will likely be tolerated better

EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION

- Perform light aerobic activity 20 minutes 6-7 days per week
- Before performing exercise determine where your symptoms (headache, dizziness, foginess, nausea) fall on the VAS scale located on the back. If at any time during the exercise these symptoms increase by more than 2 points, exercise should be stopped.

RPE SCALE

Rating	Perceived Exertion
6	No exertion
7	Extremely light
8	
9	Very light
10	
11	Light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard
16	
17	Very hard
18	
19	Extremely hard
20	Maximal exertion

Table 1. The Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale

VAS SCALE

