



# Recommendations and guidelines for safe return to sports activities of athletes and leisure trainees who contracted COVID-19: Literature review

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## Abstract

The global spread of the COVID-19 virus has led to high morbidity and mortality of people on every side of the planet while at the same time severely affecting almost all systems (social, health, economic, etc.) of each country. The majority of COVID-19 cases fall into the category of mild to moderate symptoms, lasting less than 6 weeks. However, the morbidity of COVID-19 can become severe as it can affect many of the systems of the human body. The cardiovascular, respiratory, musculoskeletal and gastrointestinal systems are mainly affected. The purpose of this review study was to record and discuss the existing guidelines for the return to sports activities of athletes of competitive level and recreational trainees who have been sick with COVID-19. For these purposes, a literature review was conducted in the databases, Pub Med, Sport Discus, PLOS Journals, Science Direct, Google Scholar. The literature review indicated minimal randomized intervention studies, mostly reviews as well as meta-analytical studies which conclude that all patients should abstain from their sports activities for 2-6 weeks if the symptoms were mild - moderate intensity while in cases of hospitalization in intensive care units or intubation, sports activities should be avoided for long periods of time. The slow, gradual and personalized return to exercise is a common landscape for all health and exercise professionals, regardless of the symptoms of the disease. Strengthening exercises should be preceded by aerobic training for each category of symptoms. The results of the present study may contribute to the creation of a concise map / diagram of return to sports activities that would actively help coaches and exercise professionals to design safe and effective training systems for both leisure trainees and athletes.

**Key words:** COVID-19, athletes, leisure trainees, return to training, exercise