

Subsymptom Threshold Physical Activity Program

Rationale: For symptomatic concussion patients, the current research indicates that inactivity is not beneficial to support recovery for a number of reasons (energy level, mood, sleep, general well being). The physical activity program described below introduces physical activity in a systematic and progressive manner, starting at a low level of intensity such that it does not increase symptoms significantly (more than 2 points on the 0-10 scale), and gradually increasing intensity and time as tolerated. This is called a progressive subsymptom threshold physical activity program.

The symptomatic patient with a concussion is allowed to engage in a systematic, daily physical conditioning program:

- Starting at a (low) level of activity that does not significantly worsen their symptoms (though they may increase a small amount, especially initially, and that is OK).
- Progressively increasing activity in terms of length of time and intensity, as he/she can tolerate it (meaning no significant increase in symptoms)

Procedure

- Use the Progress Log to guide the subsymptom threshold physical activity program.
- Use the Pictorial Children's Effort Rating (PCERT) Table to indicate the level of intensity of activity
- Start slow (e.g., 5-15 minutes at PCERT Level 3 or 4) the first day with non-jarring low level activity (e.g., stationary bike, elliptical).
- Monitor the symptoms closely. Rate them at the beginning and end of the workout session (0-10 scale). If symptoms do not worsen more than 2 points, continue with this level of time and intensity for one more day. If this level can be successfully completed 2 days in a row, increase the amount of time or the intensity the following day.
- Continue to progress with more time and/or higher intensity only if symptoms do not worsen or reappear. If they do reappear or worsen, move back to the activity level that was more tolerable.
- One time per day of this program is the starting frequency.
- Document progress and do this daily.
- Continue until symptoms resolve. Coordinate with your health care provider.

Pictorial Children's Effort Rating Table (PCERT)



