

The Postpartum Rebuild Program.

Return to impact sport checklist:

Why is contact sport different?

Returning to contact sport is not the same as returning to running. On top of impact and load, contact sport also has unpredictable movements and forces- change of direction, awkward landings, bracing against another player or in high-contact sport being tackled and bumped. → your pelvic floor and core need to respond AUTOMATICALLY and under pressure, not just in a controlled gym or straight run session.

General principles to returning to impact

- Time since birth is not a readiness marker on its own- two people the same number of weeks or months post birth can be at very different stages of recovery
 - Progress through stages - low impact → controlled/ modified training contact → training game simulation → game (ideally we don't want to return straight to an intense game!)
 - Symptoms guide progression - any sign of pelvic floor dysfunction means we need to pause and reassess your loading
 - Be mindful of the other factors - breastfeeding, sleep deprivation, low mood, low energy levels, nutrition can all impact your return, and change when might be the most ideal for you.
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Here we break down your return impact sport into three sections.

- 1. Strength + load tolerance**
- 2. Pelvic floor + core control**
- 3. Impact-specific progressions**

Tick off those you can manage, and we will work on those that can't be ticked yet.

Hitting all of these criteria is important to avoid symptoms arising when returning to your sport.

Strength + load tolerance

- ☐ Hold a plank for 30-60 seconds without doming, bulging or pelvic floor heaviness
- ☐ Can do 10+ leg squats per side with good control
- ☐ Can do 10+ single leg calf raises per side

Pelvic floor + core control

- ☐ No leaking with coughing, sneezing, 10+ jumping jacks or 10+ jump squats
- ☐ No feeling of heaviness, dragging or bulging around the vagina
- ☐ Can coordinate breath with pelvic floor underload (exhale + gentle lift on exertion, no bracing/ gripping)
- ☐ No ongoing back, hip, abdominal or pelvic pain

Impact-specific progressions

- ☐ Walking (60min+) and running (30 min+) pain and symptom free*
- ☐ Jogging on the spot for 1 min with no symptoms of heaviness/ leakage
- ☐ Single leg hop in place x 10 each side with controlled landing

**Note*- this will depend on your training history, sport history and what your goals are to get back too. Running for 30+ minutes may not always be a requirement, but may help make sure that you will be able to tolerate the load of returning to games/ longer bouts of exercise.*

When to contact your pelvic health physio...

- Leakage occurs
- Heaviness or bulging sensation
- Pelvic, back or hip pain during activity
- Ongoing abdominal discomfort/ doming