



Greater Manchester  
Mental Health  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Returning to Physical Activity after COVID-19

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Service



## Severe COVID-19 such as:

- **hospitalisation**
- **persistent symptoms of chest pain**
- **shortness of breath**
- **palpitations**
- **joint pain**
- **psychological symptoms**



Please seek advice from a GP/ post COVID  
rehabilitation services

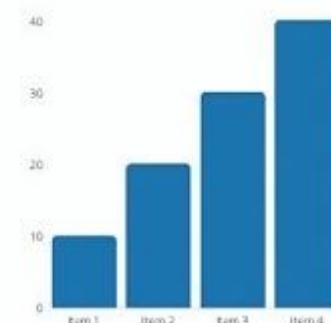
adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ



## Asymptomatic for at least 7-days:

A return to exercise or sporting activity should only occur after an asymptomatic period of at least seven days. According to the British Medical Journal – ‘a pragmatic approach that enables a gradual return to physical activity while mitigating risks, is advocated

A Phased return to physical activity & exercise over 5 weeks is advocated



adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ

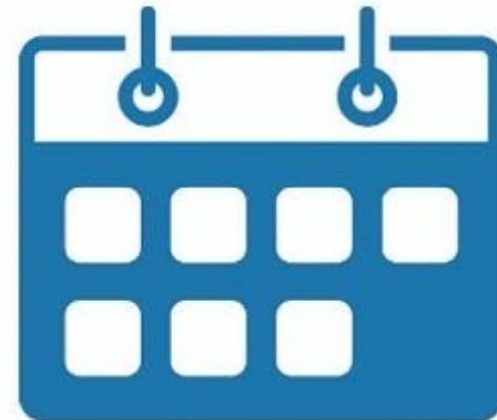


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**Only progress to the next phase after  
at least 7 days or after 7 days, when  
you personally feel ready  
to do so**

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ





## **Phase 1: Goal – Preperation for return to Exercise**

- Relaxation and breathing exercises (pursed lip breathing)
- Stretching, balance and Flexibility exercises
- Gentle walking
- RPE (rate of perceived exertion) – 6-8

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ



## **Phase 2: Goal – Low intensity physical activities**

- Walking, light yoga, light household tasks, gardening
- Graduated increases in the amount of time spent doing physical activities. RPE (rate of perceived exertion) 6-11
- Only do this if you feel recovered from previous days – constantly monitor how you are feeling, both physically and mentally. Any abnormal shortness of breath/ return of symptoms/ high temperature/ lethargy, low mood, anxiety – seek medical advice.

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ



### **Phase 3: Goal - Moderate Intensity Aerobic exercise & strength training**

- If you are steadily progressing without any reoccurring symptoms – an increase in time, frequency or intensity (to moderate) is advocated.
- Examples of this include – walking a little further/ longer or more frequently than you previously have.
- RPE (rate of perceived exertion) 12-13

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ



## **Phase 4: Goal - Moderate Intensity Aerobic exercise with co-ordination and functioning skills**

- Slowly increasing the the frequency/ intensity/ time or type of your aerobic activity, to what you are capable of achieving.
- Recovery days between physical activity/ exercise days 2:1 – example would be 1 day of 15-30 minutes physical activity / 1 day of exercise (yoga, strength training, short cardiac rehab exercises) 15-30 minutes / follwed by a full day of rest
- Progression to 5-7 days per week when fatigue levels have returned to normal

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ/ BACPR





## **Phase 5: Return to pre-covid physical activity and exercise pattern**

- If you feel like you have progressed comfortably throughout each phase, you should feel like you are able to return to your regular physical activity and exercise levels.
- RPE (rate of perceived exertion) as tolerated for you individually



adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ/ BACPR



## **Final note: Advice before beginning**

- You should be feeling physically and mentally ready to begin more physical activity.
- If at any time you feel unwell, experience shortness of breath, dizziness, sickness – please stop and seek medical advice from your doctor.
- Please don't be too disheartened if you don't feel as active or fit as you did prior – keep an eye on your progress and adapt your physical activity levels to suit you and your lifestyle.

adapted from Salman et al., 2021 BMJ