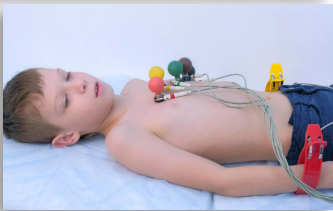


# When Is It Safe to Go Back to Sports After COVID?

by Doug Puder, MD



COVID-19 infection can sometimes cause *myocarditis* (inflammation of the heart). How often does this happen? Not often. But since *myocarditis* is a known cause of sudden cardiac death in athletes we need to carefully evaluate post-COVID. What is needed before your child or teenage athlete can participate safely?

All student athletes should be evaluated by one of our doctors before returning to sports. Heart (cardiac) testing may be also needed. It will depend on which level of COVID infection your child had:

## ● Asymptomatic infection

They had COVID but never felt sick. If there are no symptoms or findings which concern us when we examine your child and at least 10 days have passed since COVID was diagnosed, they can return to sports. An EKG or cardiology evaluation is **not** needed.

## ● Mild infection

They had fever for 4 days or less and aches/fatigue/chills for less than one week. If there are no symptoms or findings which concern us when we examine your child and at least 10 days have passed since COVID was diagnosed, they can return to sports. An EKG or cardiology evaluation is **not** needed.

## ● Moderate Infection

- ◆ They had fever for more than 4 days, *or...*
- ◆ Aches/fatigue/chills for more than 7 days, *or...*
- ◆ Hospitalized for COVID but didn't need ICU care.

A full examination in our office and an EKG are needed. If the exam and EKG are normal, they can return to sports.

## ● Moderate to Severe Infection

If during their COVID infection they had chest pain, significant shortness of breath, very rapid heart beat, fainting or abnormal EKG they should have a full evaluation with a pediatric cardiologist before returning to sports.

## ● Severe Infection

If they were treated in an ICU or diagnosed with *MIS-C* (*Multi-Inflammatory Syndrome in Children*). They should have a full evaluation with a pediatric cardiologist before returning to sports.

After recovering from COVID-19 infection, we recommend restarting exercise gradually. The intensity of exercise should start light and work up to pre-COVID intensity over one week. Parents/coaches should watch recovering athletes for chest pain, shortness of breath, unusually fast heart beat, or lightheaded dizzy feelings (near fainting).

Thankfully, to date all of our patients who have had COVID have recovered. We are glad to see them enjoying full sports activity again!