

Expert alert: 5 tips for getting back into the game

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People look forward to opening day of baseball season, perhaps even more this year amid the pandemic.

Mayo Clinic [orthopedic surgeon](#) and Minnesota Twins medical director Dr. Christopher Camp has treated all levels of athletes—from pro athletes to youth getting started in their sport. Whether returning to their activity after injury or a long layoff, athletes can take steps to smooth their transition back to the game.

Dr. Camp offers these five tips for getting back to your sport:

Tip #1: Set appropriate goals. Determine your goals before you resume play: Is it for exercise? Do you want to compete recreationally? Do you have professional aspirations? It's important to be honest about your ambitions and abilities. They can be above or below what you are capable of, even if you are in [good health](#).

Tip 2: Choose an appropriate timeline. If you know you want to get back to a certain sport by a certain

time, be clear about when you need to start your training so you don't rush your preparation.

Tip 3: Establish a logical progression of your activities. This will depend on the sport, the demands of your position, the shape you're currently in. Whatever your starting level, you want to advance slowly—do a little more each week—without any undue pain or soreness.

Tip 4: Introduce one new thing at a time. For example, if you're a former three-sport [athlete](#) coming back from injury, don't go back to all three at once. That's not to say that you can't resume all three sports eventually; prioritize them and do them one at a time.

Tip 5: Catch any injury when it's minor and intervene before it becomes a major [injury](#). Dr. Camp, who works closely with pitchers and overhead throwing athletes, says any pain that comes from throwing is abnormal, particularly for younger pitchers. Many [young athletes](#) do not want to stop playing and may try to hide their injuries. Coaches and parents should be on the lookout for any red flags in their young athletes, such as limping, moving more slowly than normal. For the vast majority of injuries, if we catch them early, the road to recovery is much shorter.

If you have had COVID-19, be sure to talk to your doctor before you return to vigorous activity.

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