

Returning to leisure (what you enjoy doing in your free time) after a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or concussion is an important part of the recovery process – a part that gets you back to who you are, doing the activities that matter most to you.

- After an injury, leisure is sometimes the last piece people focus on since medical concerns may require attention first. However, what a person chooses to do in their free time can support recovery and well-being by providing opportunities to stay active, apply skills learned in therapy, connect with their community, cope with stress, and find purpose and meaning in daily life.
- Symptoms of mTBI can sometimes affect a person's leisure by impacting their ability to:
  - Plan or organize activities
  - Feel confident or comfortable while participating in activities
  - Transport themselves to and from activities (if symptoms interfere with driving ability)
  - Initiate social contact
  - Obtain and/or manage finances
  - Tolerate busy, crowded settings

### Recommended Leisure Activities

After mTBI or concussion, many leisure activities can be helpful to participate in, whether on your own or with friends and family. Recreation can provide valuable opportunities to support overall health, but it is important to pace yourself and tune into your symptoms and energy levels as you gradually increase activity.

The following are a few options to increase leisure activity at home and in the community:

- **Aquatics:** Swimming, water aerobics or water exercises
- **Expressive Arts:** Painting, drawing, pottery, photography, woodworking, dancing, drama, knitting/crocheting, creative writing, scrapbooking, singing, playing a musical instrument
- **Horticulture:** Indoor and outdoor gardening, flower arranging, helping with lawn care and landscaping
- **Indoor Activities:** Board games, computer/internet, video games, cards, reading, cooking, models, crossword puzzles, movies, trivia
- **Sports and Fitness:** Bowling, golf, aerobics classes, ping pong, billiards, yard games, weightlifting, home exercise, volleyball, soccer
- **Outdoor Activities:** Canoeing, kayaking, fishing, camping, bird watching, walking/hiking, swimming
- **Community Activities:** Restaurants, movies, sporting events, museums, theatres, shopping malls, religious services, community service activities/volunteering, groups/clubs, community recreation leagues, therapeutic camps/retreats



### Safety Considerations During Leisure After mTBI

- Certain activities require more attention to safety, physical abilities, and thinking skills to protect yourself from reinjury or longer recovery.
  - High-impact sports (such as wrestling, basketball, football, water-skiing, or horseback riding) and high-intensity sports or workouts (such as running or HIIT)
  - Driving activities (this includes golf carts, jet skis, ATVs, and boats)
  - Activities with use of specialized equipment (e.g., power tools, shooting, hunting, archery)
  - Activities in intense environments that can be hard on the body or brain (such as busy, noisy concerts, or high-pressure scuba diving)

*Consult your healthcare providers to learn how best to return to these activities and to receive strategies to build your confidence, endurance, and ability to manage symptoms.*

### Helpful Strategies for Return to Leisure and Community

- Build leisure activity into your weekly schedule.
  - Make leisure a priority alongside other responsibilities to support overall wellbeing.
  - Develop routines to make these activities into healthy habits.
  - *Example:* Mon/Weds take a walk; Tues/Thurs practice guitar
- Gradually increase the challenge of activities.
  - Monitor symptoms carefully, particularly during physically or mentally challenging activities.
  - If you are not experiencing symptoms at your current level of activity, you can extend the amount of time or increase the challenge of the activity.
- Include relaxing leisure throughout the day or week to bounce back from more challenging tasks.
- Consider potential challenges and plan.
  - Ask questions such as:
    - What will be challenging about this setting or activity?
    - Is it noisy or busy? Are there areas to take breaks or places to sit that are quiet and less distracting? When are quieter times to visit?
    - What fees are associated with the activity?
    - Can reservations or tickets be purchased in advance?
    - How long is the event?
    - Would it be helpful to have support from a family member or friend?
    - What else would help make this outing or activity a positive experience?
  - *Example:* If participating in sports and causes you to feel dizzy, tired, or overwhelmed, what are some ways to respond? Perhaps stretching and taking deep breaths, switching to a lower impact position, or taking a break on the sidelines can help.

*A recreational therapist or other healthcare providers can help you learn strategies and tools specific to your leisure interests and symptoms.*





### Resources for Recreation and Leisure after mTBI

The ability to find programs, people, and places is an important step toward becoming and staying active and engaged. Listed below are some resources to support your leisure interests:

- Adaptive Sport Organizations (National, Local/State)
  - Move United <https://www.moveunitedsport.org/>
  - PGA Reach <https://www.pgareach.org/>
- Brain Injury Associations (National, State) <https://www.biausa.org/>
- Parks & Recreation Departments
- Camps & Retreats
- Local Community College/University
- Local Museums & Attractions
- Local Library
- Local Rehabilitation Centers, Day Programs, & Wellness Clinics
- Newspapers, Magazines, Online Event Postings & Social Media
- Service & Religious Organizations (Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Religious sites)
- Special Interest Clubs (e.g., foreign language, sports, chess)
- Veteran Service Organizations
- YWCA/YMCA

### Additional Comments:

