

Safety Alert - Returning to fitness after Covid

Recovery must be a carefully planned and controlled process. So how should you try to get back to full fitness when recovering from Covid or other viral infection? You should:-

- recognise that even if you have recovered from the acute stage, the effects of the disease remain and will become apparent if you put your body under physical stress;
- ensure that your recovery is steady, controlled, and progressive. This inevitably means that it will take time. You must be patient;
- understand the dangers you face if you do not control your return to fitness; and
- if you needed hospital treatment, had cardiac symptoms, severe breathlessness, still have any symptoms or have any concerns, then consult your doctor.

There are many dangers when returning to fitness following any viral disease but the one which causes most concern is the risk of Myocarditis, this causes inflammation of the heart muscle and can result in long-term or permanent damage.

Coaches should take great care to manage rowers. They should ensure that the rowers do not try to rush and that they do not allow peer pressure to encourage rowers to do so.

There are five phases that you should follow in your return to fitness. These are described in an article in the British Medical Journal, [here](#) or follow the QR code below.

1. Light exercise with no exertion. It could also include flexibility exercises and technique exercises in a boat.
2. Gentle, aerobic exercise, such as walking or slow jogging or slow paddling, providing the heart rate is not elevated.
3. Moderate intensity aerobic and strength & conditioning exercises. This could be two intervals of 5-minute aerobic exercise followed by rest.
4. Somewhat hard intensity aerobic and strength & conditioning exercise. Only progress to the next stage when fatigue levels are normal at the end of the exercise.
5. Baseline exercise returning to the normal exercise pattern. Only attempt any degree of exertion if you feel comfortable doing so.



If you do not recover completely in a reasonable time, then go back one phase. If it feels uncomfortable then stop. Each phase should take about one week, possibly more.

It does not matter how fit you were before you contracted Covid, what really matters is to stay safe as you return to fitness. This needs great care.

If you are ill then training will not make you better, but it could make you much worse.

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