COVID-19: Physical training guidance

This document is aimed at members of national governing bodies.

sportwales
chwaraeoncymru

This document is aimed at **pathway and club level athletes** with guidance being split into two parts:

1. Training modification during the COVID-19 restrictions
2. Return to full training after the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted

The document is not a **guideline** but rather a **guidance document.** This guidance is based on 'expert opinion' due to there being a lack of evidence currently on COVID-19. This guidance will therefore be reviewed and updated at regular intervals as more is learned about COVID-19. You are therefore advised to check regularly for updates.

This guidance should be used in strict accordance with current Welsh government guidelines information and FAQs available on KIT here . This guidance is not for those who have or have had COVID-19 symptoms.

Training modification

During this pandemic it is important to exercise regularly at moderate intensity levels as this boost immune function and can help reduce the risk of illness. **High training volumes, periods of intensified training** and **prolonged strenuous training** may suppress immune function, thereby increasing the risk of illness. This means that now is not the time to do **hard** or **long** training sessions. The priority is to maintain current levels of fitness and strength throughout this period before gradually progressing back to full training.

Recommendations

- Do not train if experiencing any suspected coronavirus symptoms
- Ensure social distancing in all aspects of physical training
- Reducing total training load by approximately 10%. Training load consists of both intensity and duration
- It would not be sensible to increase the intensity or duration of sessions at the current time
- Carefully manage changes in overall training
- Plan an easier recovery or adaptation week every 2nd of 3rd week of the training cycle

NHS and private healthcare resources are currently under significant strain leading to reallocation of many services previously considered routine. Given this, our recommendation is that adjustments be made to training sessions, and environments, to mitigate potential risk of injury and to reduce the need to access limited healthcare resources.

Returning to training post COVID-19 restrictions

The aim of this document is to assist in returning members back to full training loads following a period of reduced or modified training. Through a gradual progression in training, based on current training modifications this will allow all members to return to previous training loads in the most efficient way possible and minimise the risk of injury, illness and further time off training.

Considerations

- Some athletes will be able to return to 'normal' training quicker than others, conversely some may take longer
- The athletes training load pre the COVID-19 break should be used as the level you are aiming to return to
- Use your usual measure of training load (e.g. distance, training time, heart rate, etc)
- Perceived exertion to training sessions and recovery/wellness after training should be used to help guide progression. Perceived exertion is the subjective feel on how difficult a particular session was on that day.

What if I can't train as normal?

Even a small amount of training can be beneficial. Scientific research has shown that completing a small amount of training each week can greatly reduce decreases in strength and aerobic endurance. Continuing some training will also help to speed up return to full training.

What if I can't train at all?

Don't Panic!!! There have been numerous examples of elite athletes taking large period of time completely off training due to pregnancy, injury or planned rest periods, yet comeback just as strong or stronger. Research has also showed that following 8 weeks of **no training** you can return to similar levels of fitness after 8 weeks of retraining. Important to follow sensible and guided training load progressions over this period.

How to approach a return from reduced training load?

		Weeks of modified training to return to full training				
Weeks of training at a reduced load	12	10.2	9.0	7.8	6.7	5.5
	8	8	6.9	5.8	4.8	3.7
	4	5.7	4.7	3.6	2.5	1.5
	2	4.6	3.6	2.5	1.4	0.4
		0%	20%	40%	60%	80%
		Percentage of normal training load completed				

Source: AIS - Prescription of training load in relation to loading and unloading phases of training (2015)

Key:
Red = Long Return Time
Amber = Moderate Return Time
Green = Short Return Time

Practical Examples

Example 1

If an athlete has **8 weeks** of not being able to perform any training **(0%),** the athlete will require 8 weeks of incremental training to return to full training (pre COVID-19 training levels)

Example 2

If an athlete has **8 weeks** of training at a reduced load **(40%),** the athlete will require **5.8 weeks** of incremental training to return to full training (pre COVID-19 training levels)

Example 3

If an athlete has **8 weeks** of training at a reduced load **(80%),** the athlete will require **3.7 weeks** of incremental training to return to full training (pre COVID-19 training levels

Recommendations for maintaining Muscle mass, Strength & Power with limited resources

- Lighter weights lifted to the point of volitional failure work to enhance gains, and prevent losses in muscle mass
- Aim for 3 sessions per week
- Volume can be increased if desired frequency is less
- Increases in power are possible using a wider variety of loads
- Work with intention and focus – quality with the intention to lift as explosively as possible

Don’t Forget …

- Plan adequate recovery throughout this period
- Monitor all forms of physical and psychosocial stress
- Aim for >8 hours sleep each night
- Maintain high hygiene standards