

RETURN TO SPORT PROGRESSION: TENNIS

1. The athlete must pass all functional tests and/or be cleared by sports medicine medical provider before beginning Return to Tennis Protocol.
2. Recommend pursuing Transitional Therapy for return to sport activities during this phase
Transitional Therapy is a strength and conditioning program that is led by medical professionals with a sports medicine background with the goal of transitioning from therapy back to sport.
3. The athlete may progress through the phases as tolerated. Cross-training can be performed on off days. (Cross training can be done by performing non sport specific activities i.e. strength training, biking, yoga, and/or PT home exercises)
4. Each phase should be performed 2-3 times with one day rest between each session, the athlete should progress to the next phase once he/she is able to complete the current phase without pain, swelling, decreased range of motion or difficulty.
5. While some soreness is expected if the athlete experiences pain, swelling, decreased range of motion during a phase, he/she should take a day off and go back to the prior phase where they were not experiencing pain and or difficulty completing activities. Do not keep moving through the phases if you are having pain or difficulty. Seek medical attention if necessary.
6. Emphasis should be placed on developing and maintaining proper mechanics without developing symptoms or excessive fatigue.
7. The athlete should ice the affected area for 15-20 minutes following the activity

Tennis ball progression: Foam balls → low compression balls → standard balls

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Begin dry swings and soft toss with foam ball	•	•	•	•	•
Return to standard tennis ball begin at 50% effort		•	•	•	•
Progress to rally with partner and serving			•	•	•
Return to practice				•	•
Match play					•
Tournaments	Athlete must be able to play in tennis matches for 2-3 weeks without difficulty or pain before playing in tournaments.				

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- **Phase 1: Begin dry swings, soft toss with foam ball at 50% effort**
 - Full body warm up for 5-10 minutes
 - Continue with Physical Therapy home exercises if applicable
 - Begin dry swings at 50% effort, soft toss with **foam ball**
 - Step 1:
 - 15 backhand swings
 - 15 forehand swings; (rest 5 minutes)
 - 15 backhand swings
 - 15 forehand swings
 - Step 2:
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings; (rest 5 minutes)
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings

- **Phase 2: Progress dry swings to 75% effort and begin return to standard tennis ball**
 - Full body warm up for 5-10 minutes
 - Progress swings to 75% effort with foam ball → low compression ball
 - Step 1:
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings; (rest 5 minutes)
 - 20 backhand swings
 - Step 2: Partner fed ground strokes, soft feeds about waist height from net
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings; (rest 5 minutes)
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings

 - **Progress to STANDARD tennis balls at 50% effort**
 - Partner fed ground strokes- soft feeds about waist height from net
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings; (rest 5 minutes)
 - 20 backhand swings
 - 20 forehand swings

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- **Phase 3: Return to rally and serving at 75% effort**
 - Graded return to rally with partner and serving; begin with 50% effort
 - Warm up with soft toss
 - 15 backhand swings, 15 forehand swings
 - Step 1:
 - Rally with partner from baseline with controlled ground strokes
 - 40-50 strokes (alternating forehand and backhand swings)
 - Step 2:
 - 15 minutes of rallying from baseline with controlled ground strokes alternating forehand and backhand
 - 10 forehand and 10 backhand volleys, rest 5 minutes
 - Rally for another 15 minutes
 - 10 forehand and 10 backhand volleys
 - **Serving progression**
 - Step 1:
 - 10 serves with no ball, focusing on form
 - 10 serves with foam, focusing on form
 - 10 serves standard ball 50% effort
 - Step 2:
 - 10 serves with foam,
 - 10 serves standard ball 75% effort
 - can start incorporating slice serves
 - Step 3:
 - 15 serves standard ball 75% effort
 - can start incorporating kick serves
 - 15 serves standard ball 100% effort
 - 5 partner fed lobs for 5 overhead strokes
- **Phase 4: Return to tennis practice**
 - Graded return to practice; unrestricted forehand/ backhand swings, rallies, overhead strokes and serves
 - Continue working on form and increasing amount of serves as tolerated
- **Phase 5: Matches/ Tournaments**
 - Must complete all above stages without pain or difficulty to start match play
 - Must be able to complete 2-3 weeks at 100% effort in practice and matches with no pain or difficulty before playing in tournaments
 - Gradually increase amount of serves up to 20, 40, 60, 80, once you reach 100 you can start full competitive play in tournaments