

Exercise after COVID-19: When it's safe to return to normal activities

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Most doctors agree: Exercise is good for you. However, that may not be true for people who are sick with or have just recovered from COVID-19.

Refrain from exercise while ill

"COVID can affect the lungs and the heart and presents risks for both adults and children," explains Deepak Patel, MD, Rush Copley Medical Group family and sports medicine physician. Because of this, he and other sports medicine experts recommend refraining from [exercise](#) for 14 days if you test positive for COVID. This will help limit the spread of the disease as well as protect your health.

In addition, he says to be cautious about resuming exercise as you recover and recommends consulting with your physician before you start exercising again—regardless of your age and however mild or severe your case was.

"People who were hospitalized with [severe illness](#) need additional testing to be cleared for exercise," Patel says, but adds that even if you had a milder

case that was treated at home, you should consult your primary care provider before resuming exercise.

Potential complications for young or old

Because COVID-19 affects various parts of the body, a return to exercise before your body is ready could result in life-threatening complications, and these could affect children, athletes, non-athletes and [young people](#) as well as [older adults](#).

Some COVID patients have developed myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle, as well as damage to the heart. Approximately 20% of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 suffer cardiac or clotting complications. It is also possible that the infection can damage or inflame the [heart](#) and lungs of those who experienced mild or no symptoms.

"Even though exercise is almost always a great thing," Patel says, "to be safe, anyone who has had COVID should be cautious and consult their provider before returning to physical activity."

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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