

Return to Sports After Minimally Invasive Decompression/Discectomy Surgery

This handout outlines a typical timeline for returning to physical activity and sports after minimally invasive lumbar decompression or discectomy surgery. Individual recovery may vary. Always follow your surgeon's guidance.

Time From Surgery	Allowed Activities	Sports to Avoid
0–2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking only • Light stationary bike (no resistance) after 1 week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running/jogging • Lifting >10–15 lb • Bending/twisting • All sports
2–6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elliptical • Fast walking • Light core work (McGill Big 3) • Gentle stretching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running • Tennis/golf • Heavy lifting • HIIT/CrossFit • Contact sports
6–8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light jogging if radicular symptoms resolved • Swimming • Cycling/Spin • Rowing (light) • Body-weight strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High-impact sports • Barbell squats/deadlifts • Golf/Tennis (full) • Pivoting sports
10–12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Running (full) • Golf (short game → full) • Tennis/Pickleball (progressive) • Skiing (easy terrain) • Full gym workouts (moderate weights) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximal lifting • Collision sports
3–4 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive running • Basketball • Soccer • Volleyball • CrossFit (scaled) • Moderate-to-heavy lifting (controlled) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football, hockey, rugby, wrestling
4–6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full return to all non-contact sports • High-intensity training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collision sports until surgeon clearance
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full return to contact/collision sports if no deficits, good core strength, and no radicular symptoms 	

Quick Summary:

- Walking: immediately
- Jogging: 6–8 weeks
- Running/Gym/Golf/Tennis: 10–12 weeks
- Basketball/Soccer/CrossFit: 3–4 months
- Football/Contact sports: ~6 months