

As school and sports continue to move forward, Cook Children's Heart Center Medical Director [Deborah Schutte, M.D.](#), wants to ensure parents and coaches are taking the proper precautions for athletes returning to play after contracting COVID-19. She recommends all athletes who previously have had COVID-19 see their doctors for full evaluations and that they follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) post-COVID-19 return-to-play guidance.

Below are some of the main takeaways:

- Children and adolescents who had severe presentations of COVID-19 must be treated as though they have myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and be restricted from exercise for three to six months.
 - These athletes must be cleared to resume participation by their primary care doctors and appropriate pediatric medical subspecialists, preferably a pediatric cardiologist. Examples of severe conditions that warrant the above:
 - Hypotension, arrhythmias, intubation or extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) support, kidney or cardiac failure or multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).
- Because of limited information on COVID-19 and exercise, the AAP strongly encourages that all children and adolescents with COVID-19 be cleared for participation by their doctor. The focus of this screening should be for cardiac symptoms, such as chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue, palpitations or syncope.
- For mild cases, it is still important to rest until no symptoms are present for 14 days, and then ease back into activity. While we know this might be frustrating for some children, a cautious approach is recommended. There have been reports of inflammation/edema in the heart muscles and layers, even in asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic children.
- Even if your child showed no symptoms, but was diagnosed with COVID-19, it is still recommended their doctor evaluate them.
- It is crucial for schools to have automated external defibrillator (AED) therapy readily available, in case a child collapses. Please visit [Project ADAM's](#) website to learn how you can advocate for this at your child's school.

For more information regarding these recommendations for children returning to play after COVID-19, please visit the [AAP website](#).

This information is current as of December 2020 and is subject to change.

For additional health content from Cook Children's, visit [Checkup Newsroom](#).
If your child is in need of pediatrician, visit cookchildrens.org/pediatrics.
