



# ROLE OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY AND SPORTS NUTRITION IN RETURN TO PLAY FROM MUSCULOSKELETAL INJURIES IN PROFESSIONAL SOCCER: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

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**Musculoskeletal injuries** are prevalent in professional soccer and can result in lost training time or match play.



IT IS INTUITIVE THAT THE “RETURN TO PLAY” (RTP) PATHWAY WILL DEPEND, IN LARGE PART, ON THE EXPERTISE OF SPORTS MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS (E.G., SURGEONS, PHYSICIANS, PHYSIOTHERAPISTS) RESPONSIBLE FOR PLAYER’S RECOVERY.



Using a **framework of milestones** directed by the medical physician and physical trainer, evidence is summarised and suggestions provided on the integration of sports psychology and sports nutrition into an interdisciplinary RTP approach.



We examine recovery from a **phase approach** (acute injury and functional recovery) to highlight interdisciplinary opportunities in the management of musculoskeletal soccer injuries.



The incorporation of **sports psychology and nutrition theoretically** compliment milestones used in current medically-based RTP models.



However, it remains uncertain whether or how adoption of an **interdisciplinary approach** speeds or facilitates a more effective and/or comprehensive recovery in comparison to single discipline approaches.



This paper is also a **“call to action”** for additional research. This research, and associated applied practice efforts, is needed to examine the value of an interdisciplinary approach in facilitating player functional and RTP outcomes.

## RTP consideration

## Nutrition / Psychology interdisciplinary examples

Acute injury	Dietary intake and supplementation plan as an action to achieve sense of control.
Body mass management	Routine body composition analysis provides short-and-long term goal setting targets.
Inactivity	Meals providing structure to day, avoid episodes of reduced self- worth and binge eating.
Social isolation / inclusion	Inclusion of players on team eating occasions and having players complete rehabilitation alongside teammates who are training to maintain sense of identity.
Role models	Establish “mentor” programme between injured player and role model who successfully overcame similar injury. Sharing of previous experience of both sports nutrition and sports psychology strategies that “helped” the RTP, to facilitate rehabilitation adherence.
Readiness	Nutrition provided prior to exercise and education enhances players understanding of their body to facilitate confidence and enhance psychological readiness (confidence, emotions, risk appraisals, approach-avoidance motivations). Education also serves to inform about best sources of information (avoid unqualified advice from internet/social media).

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