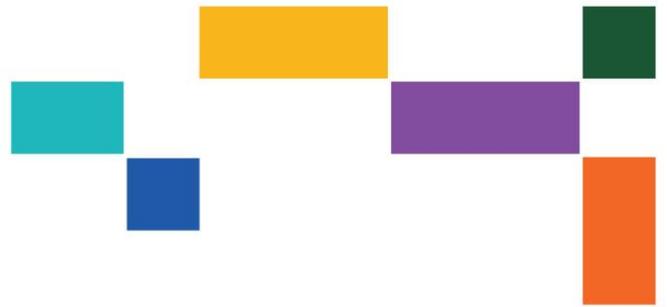


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# RETURN TO TRAINING





## RETURN TO TRAINING

**To: FINA Athletes**

**From: FINA Sports Medicine Committee**

As the world continues to come to terms with COVID-19, physical distancing and “lock down” has affected us all. But for FINA athletes there is the additional burden of separation from water-based training – the unique distinction that sets us apart from athletes engaged in land-based sport.

The FINA Sports Medicine Committee (SMC) continues to inform the FINA COVID-19 Task Force, using advice from the World Health Organisation and Government Agencies understanding that guidelines may require adjustment for your federation or country. This message comes at a time when Public Health Authorities in many countries have signaled their intention to allow a limited return to swimming pools, on the understanding that hygiene measures, hand washing, physical distancing and contact tracing initiatives are observed.

The SMC respectfully reminds all stakeholders that athletes, forced into an unprecedented and prolonged break from habituated training routines, may experience the physical effects of “*detraining*.”

Briefly, “*detraining*” is a natural physiological phenomenon occurring over weeks and months after an individual ceases regular training. This results in a diminished efficiency of heart and lungs to transport oxygen and use this in active muscles (i.e. reduced cardio-respiratory efficiency), and a diminished capacity of skeletal muscle to display strength, flexibility and endurance (i.e. reduced musculoskeletal capability). Given the changes in energy expenditure, individual nutritional requirements will also change.

For professional athletes with access to expertise in sports science and medicine, we understand that these issues will have already been anticipated and, to some extent, minimised by land-based exercise. However, many FINA athletes do not enjoy these privileges and it is inevitable that all athletes will be affected to some extent. Sport specific fitness for aquatic athletes can only be fully achieved through water-based activities.





The SMC wishes to raise these issues for the benefit of all aquatic athletes. We advise a gradual resumption of training, balancing water-based and land-based activities and increasing these elements slowly, starting with low and medium intensity exercise. This will allow your body to readjust and minimise the risk of overuse injury through failure to adapt to increasing workload. Rising energy demands of training will also require appropriate nutritional intake.

We also appreciate the psychological impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on athletes, affecting normal interactions and routines, and as a consequence of postponement or cancellation of FINA events. Return to competition fitness will take several months and FINA will take this into account when making future decisions.

Members of the FINA SMC remain available to answer any specific inquiries you may have on these or other matters relating to the athlete health and welfare across all aquatic disciplines. Our wish is that you each enjoy a safe and uneventful resumption of training and a successful return to competition fitness.

Dr. Cees-Rein van den Hoogenband  
SMC Chair

8 June 2020



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