

Coming back to training after illness

The general guidelines are:

- Train on heart rate on the ergo/bike/cross trainer etc, not split (avoiding the ergo is a good idea unless you're really disciplined because you'll chase a split too soon).
- You need to do a good few weeks of gentle aerobic training before trying to push onto U1. Intensity will make you fall over really hard if you're still on the road back so you need to keep a lid on the effort levels.
- Monitoring your morning markers is absolutely key and anything sinister should show up in these in conjunction with how you feel. Any adverse reaction during this return to training, e.g. a recurring sore throat, a change in the presentation of your morning heart rate or a lack of enthusiasm for training would suggest you're not quite ready to start pushing yet and the process of keeping track of the morning monitoring will help highlight this.
- DON'T worry about the next trial/race/test as stress and anxiety will compromise your health further. You'll come back quicker if you stay relaxed and listen to your body.
- If you make a change, i.e. increase training heart rate or length of session, make sure you give it a few days (preferably a week) before changing anything else. Only ever change one thing at a time.

Being sick doesn't mean you can't move on as an athlete. You can still do core stability, stretching, technical work and weights (the latter if you are not very sick but need to stay away from aerobic training). But don't go down your club and spread the illness if you are still in the contagious stage!

If you regularly get ill then it is very likely that there is an aspect of your life that your body is struggling with. This may be stress, lack of sleep, inadequate nutrition, regular dehydration, lack of rest time or poor sleep patterns, of all of the above. You need to analyse where you might be going wrong and make some permanent changes to your lifestyle and behaviours if you are struggling with illness all winter.

WARNING: if you have had a significant period of more than a few days when you have not been able to do any training your body will get a bit 'soft' and some of your supporting structures will switch off. It's not unusual for athletes to come back to training after a long break and get injured very quickly. To avoid this make sure you 'switch on' with activation work and lighter weights to begin with until you feel that you're robust again.

Summary

- Keep a daily morning monitoring record
- Analyse the monitoring and anything that's an anomaly should be taken seriously, e.g. poor sleep/high heart rate/low heart rate/feeling low/etc
- Come back to training patiently and intelligently, and don't try and work to a deadline, work to how your body feels
- Expect a few bumps in the road, you may have a couple of minor setbacks but don't panic, this is normal
- Only change one thing at a time and give it a few days to see if your body copes with it
- Life stress is also relevant, if you have something in your life that's adding a bit of 'load' to what your body has to deal with then you need to take that into consideration

- Analyse areas where you can improve your lifestyle to give your body the best chance of recovery
- Keep communicating with your coach – if you aren't sure of what to do next, please let them know