

THE ULTIMATE 2026

FANTASY FOOTBALL INJURY CHEAT SHEET

INJURY BREAKDOWN

AC JOINT SPRAIN/SHOULDER SEPARATION	Often 1–6+ weeks depending on grade, pain, and contact demands.	Mild cases may return in 1–3 weeks with padding or pain management, while higher-grade injuries or throwing-side injuries may take longer.
ACL TEAR	Usually 6–12+ months after reconstruction, with performance recovery often taking longer than medical clearance.	Same-season return is unlikely after an ACL tear. Even after returning the next season, players may need time to regain confidence, strength, explosiveness, and cutting ability.
CALF STRAIN	Often 2–6+ weeks depending on grade, recurrence, and sprint demands.	Mild cases may return in 1–3 weeks, but recurrence, tightness, or reduced push-off can limit explosiveness.
CONCUSSION	Often 1–2+ weeks, but symptoms and clearance timelines vary widely.	Players must complete the NFL return-to-participation protocol, with timing based on symptoms, history, and medical clearance.
GROIN/ADDUCTOR STRAIN	Often 2–6+ weeks depending on grade, recurrence, and lateral movement demands.	Mild cases may return in 1–3 weeks, but symptoms can linger if the athlete returns before cutting, sprinting, and lateral movement are fully tolerated.
HAMSTRING STRAIN	Often 2–6+ weeks depending on grade, recurrence, and sprint demands.	Mild cases may return in 1–3 weeks, but recurrence risk is a major concern if the athlete returns before full-speed sprinting is restored.
HAND/FINGER FRACTURE	Often 2–6+ weeks depending on the bone, joint, stability, and whether surgery is needed.	Some players may return same day with taping, splinting, protective padding, or a custom cast/club, but position matters heavily.
HIGH ANKLE SPRAIN	Often 4–8+ weeks, with more significant cases taking longer.	Some players may return in 2–4+ weeks, but early return often comes with reduced push-off, slower change of direction, and limited rotational tolerance.
LATERAL ANKLE SPRAIN	Mild cases may settle in several days to 2 weeks, while more severe or unstable sprains can take 3–6+ weeks.	Days to 2 weeks. Mild ankle sprains can be managed quickly with taping, bracing, and symptom control, especially if the athlete has enough stability to cut, plant, and tolerate contact.
MCL SPRAIN	Mild injuries may recover in 1–3 weeks, moderate injuries often take 4–8+ weeks, and more severe or combined injuries can take longer.	Some players return earlier with a hinged brace if the knee is stable, but it does not restore cutting ability, confidence, or explosiveness.
MENISCUS TEAR	Smaller or non-surgical cases may take weeks, while surgical recovery varies based on whether the meniscus is trimmed or repaired.	Some players return 1–3 weeks after less complex cases or ignoring the injury, while repairs, recurrent swelling, or mechanical symptoms can take much longer.
TURF TOE	Often 2–6+ weeks depending on severity, with more serious cases sometimes lingering longer.	Mild cases may return in 1–3 weeks, but symptoms can linger because the big toe is involved in nearly every explosive football movement.