

Post-operative Rehabilitation Protocol

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Reconstruction: Patellar Tendon Autograft

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| General Guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical therapy should begin 3-5 days after surgery - You will be weight bearing as tolerated with crutches (Unless meniscus repair performed – follow meniscus repair protocol for first 6 weeks) - You will be in a brace until you can perform straight leg raise without quad lag - Return to sport will be at 9-12 months after surgery - Contact therapist or physician with any questions/concerns | | |
| | Range of Motion | Brace | Exercises |
| Phase 1 – Early protection <i>Weeks 0 - 2</i> | Restore full knee extension immediately following surgery, minimize swelling, activate quad. Goal 0 – 90° <i>Ice:</i> 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off every hour | Locked in extension for walking and sleeping. D/C crutches when gait is non-antalgic | Straight leg raises with brace locked, quad sets, calf pumps, patellar mobilizations E-stim after 1 week if tolerated |
| Phase 2 – Early loading <i>Weeks 2 - 6</i> | Goal to achieve full, pain-free ROM. *Maintain extension* | Unlocked when quad control is adequate D/C brace between 3-4 weeks if good quad control | <u>Exercises:</u> Progress strengthening → Mini squats, weight shifts, leg press (0 – 80° arc), stationary bike. Proprioception training Initiate step-up program <u>Modalities:</u> E-stim, Game ready |
| Phase 3 - Strength <i>Weeks 6 - 16</i> | Full, pain-free ROM | None | <u>Exercises:</u> Progress phase 2. Leg press, lunges. Progressive squat program. Initiate step down program. Endurance – Elliptical, Versaclimber |
| Phase 4 – Jog to Run <i>Weeks 16 – 22</i> | Full, pain-free ROM | Fitted for ACL brace if desired for return to sports | Begin forward running program (Treadmill) Continue strengthening and Flexibility Begin plyometrics: Single-leg hop downs, directional jumps, tuck jumps Advance sport-specific agility drills |
| Phase 4 – Jog to Run <i>Weeks 22+ Return to Sport</i> | Full, pain-free ROM | Fitted for ACL brace if desired for return to sports | <u>Criteria to return to sports:</u> At least 90% limb symmetry on hop and isokinetic strength test. No reactive pain or swelling after sport-specific activities. MD Clearance <u>Encourage maintenance program based on functional sports assessment</u> |