

ANTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT RECONSTRUCTION REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Ross M. Nakaji, PT, OCS, SCS, ATC
Dr. Kalle Stidham

ACL Reconstruction Rehabilitation program is an evidence based and soft tissue healing dependent program which allows patients to progress to vocational and sports related activities as quickly and safely as possible. Individual variations will occur based on age, graft type (*Allograft or Autograft, soft tissue fixation or bone plug fixation*), other pathology in the knee, patient tolerance and “response to treatment.” Brace may be removed for sleeping after post operative day 8. If a meniscus repair is performed in conjunction with the ACL repair, It is not necessary to modify protocol. Protocol is to be modified if cartilage procedure was performed.

PHASE I (0 – 4 weeks)

Weight bearing: WBAT with crutches. DC crutches when no extensor lag.

Bracing: Brace locked in full extension for 1 week. 1 – 4 weeks unlock brace for ambulation and may remove for sleeping.

ROM: As tolerated: Passive Extension, Heel slides, patellar mobilizations, gastroc/soleus stretch.

Strengthening: Quad and Hamstring sets, SLR with brace in full extension until quadriceps strength prevents extension lag.

PHASE II (4 – 6 weeks)

Weight bearing: Full

Bracing: Discontinue knee brace when patient has full extension.

ROM: Maintain full extension ROM and progress flexion ROM.

Strengthening/Stretching: Progress to weight training gastroc/soleus stretch
Begin heel raises, closed chain ex, balance exercises, hamstring curls and stationary bike.

PHASE III (6 weeks – 4 months)

Bracing: None

ROM: Full

Strengthening/Stretching: Advance closed chain strengthening
Progress proprioception activities
Begin stairmaster and straight ahead running at 12 weeks
after functional testing criteria met.

PHASE IV (4 – 6 months)

Strengthening/Stretching: Progress flexibility and strengthening.
Straight and backwards running, cutting and grapevines.
Plyometric program and sports specific drills.

PHASE V (6 months and beyond)

Gradual return to sport. Maintenance program for strength and endurance.