

**Post-operative Patellar Tendon Autograft ACL Reconstruction Protocol**

First 7-10 days

Keep brace on and locked in full extension. May remove for exercises.

Use crutches for partial weight bearing only.

Change dressing on the second day after surgery and replace it with dry dressing.

Perform calf pumps, straight leg raises, heel slides, and quadriceps sets at least three times each day (10-20 repetitions each time).

Use ice pack/cryocuff 3 times each day for 15 minutes each time.

Keep wound/dressings dry. No showers for seven days and no baths for 3 weeks or until wounds are healed fully. You may use saran wrap or other plastic bag (garbage bag) to keep wound dry if you want to shower sooner.

Pain medication and an antibiotic will be prescribed.

Avoid anti-inflammatories for the first six weeks after surgery.

First week to 4 weeks

At first clinic visit:

- You may unlock the brace. Wean out of the brace between 2 and 4 weeks after surgery.
- Gradually discontinue crutches and fully weight bear by 3 weeks after surgery.
- Sutures/staples will be removed. No baths or pools for 3 weeks after surgery or until wounds are healed fully.
- Use ACE wrap to protect wound against the brace and to control swelling.
- Steri-strips will fall off on their own. If not, pull them off gradually by two weeks after surgery

PT goals (Range of motion):

- Full symmetric extension by 2-4 weeks. Notify my office if not achieved.
- 90-100 degrees of flexion by 3-4 weeks and full flexion by 4-6 weeks.
- Swelling control with ice and compression.

Exercises:

- Quadriceps sets
- Straight leg raises
- Patellar mobilization
- Prone knee flexion/extension
- Heel slides
- Sitting knee flexion

4 weeks to 12 weeks

4-6 week clinic visit:

Brace should have been discontinued. Should be able to perform SLR without extensor lag, minimal swelling, full extension.

PT goals (Improve ROM, advance strengthening):

- Obtain full knee flexion by 6 weeks
- Quadriceps strengthening
- Hamstring strengthening

- Calf strengthening

Exercises:

- Wall slides and mini-squats to 45 degrees (closed chain 0-45)
- Open chain extension quads 90 to 60 degrees only with low weights.
- Hamstring curls with low weights 0-90. Progress gradually to higher weights by 12 weeks
- Toes raises, step ups
- May ride exercise bike, Nordic track, elliptical trainer, stairmaster with low resistance
- Swimming (crawl stroke, backstroke only; avoid scissors kicking strokes)

3 to 6 months

PT goals:

Continue all previous exercises to progress to full strength of quadriceps and hamstrings

Exercises:

- Start jogging at 3 months
- Full squats, leg presses at low weights and progress to full weight by 5-6 months. All weight training should be slow, controlled. No ballistic motion
- No cutting maneuvers

6 – 9 months

Goals:

- Return to sport if full range of motion, strength is 90% of other leg
- Brace not required

Exercises:

Begin with sport-specific exercises and cutting maneuvers and progress to playing over 1-6 weeks

Additional instructions:

If the right leg is the operative leg, you may not drive automatic transmission vehicle for 2-4 weeks.

If the left leg is operative leg, you may drive automatic transmission vehicle after having stopped using narcotic pain medication.

May return to sedentary desk work in 3-5 days.

May return to work requiring standing gradually over 3-4 weeks.

May return to heavy labor in 6-8 months.

Duration and frequency of PT:

For week 1-8 (14 visits): supervised 2x/week. Perform exercises on your own 5-7 days/week

For week 8-12 (4 visits): supervised 1x/week. Perform exercises on your own 3-5 days/week

For weeks 12-24 (3 visits): supervised 1x/month. Perform exercises on your own 3-5 days/week