PATIENT GUIDE · ACL RECONSTRUCTION

Your ACL Recovery Roadmap

Keep this page. It is your guide from surgery day back to your sport.

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Your recovery timeline

0–6 weeks

PHASE 1 · MOTION

Walk normally and work on bending and straightening the knee. **Goal: full or near-full motion by 6 weeks.**

6–12 weeks

PHASE 2 · STRENGTH

Build leg strength with your therapist. **Goal: strong enough to begin jogging at about 12 weeks.**

3–6 months

PHASE 3 · STRENGTH AND FUNCTION

Keep building strength, endurance and control. **Goal: training at full speed by 6 months.**

6–9 months

PHASE 4 · SPORT-SPECIFIC SKILLS

Train the movements and skills of your sport. **Goal: ready to be tested for return.**

9–12 months

RETURN TO COMPETITION

9 months is the minimum, and only when you pass strength, function and return-to-sport testing. Some athletes are not ready until 12 months, and that is normal. Research clearly shows that returning before 9 months carries a much higher risk of re-injury.

The first two weeks

Walking: Put as much weight on the leg as is comfortable. Stop using crutches as soon as you can walk without a limp.

Brace: Stop wearing it once you feel steady walking without it, usually within 2 weeks.

Motion: Start bending and straightening your knee right away.

Incisions: Stitches are under the skin. Leave the tape strips (steri-strips) on for 2 weeks if you can. Leave the dressing on and keep it dry until your first visit.

At your first post-op visit: You may shower and get the incisions wet. Physical therapy begins.

If your meniscus was also repaired

These replace the walking, brace and motion rules:

Brace: Locked straight for 6 weeks.

Crutches: Partial weight for 4 weeks. A complex or radial tear repair may need 6 weeks.

Motion: Bending limited to 0–90°, moved by your therapist only, for the first 4 weeks.

Your therapist will follow a separate meniscus repair protocol. We will tell you after surgery if this applies to you.

Call us at (949) 759-3600 if you have: fever over 101°F · increasing redness, drainage or opening of an incision · new calf pain or swelling. **Chest pain or trouble breathing: call 911.**