

PT PROTOCOL

Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) Reconstruction — Hamstring Tendon Autograft

Rehabilitation Protocol

Weight-Bearing Status

ONLY IF DIFFERENT FROM PROTOCOL BELOW

Weight-bearing may be modified if a concomitant procedure (e.g., meniscal repair, meniscal transplant, or articular cartilage procedure) was performed. Follow the weight-bearing status in the phases below unless a different status is indicated here.

☐ Non-weight-bearing

☐ Toe-touch / partial weight-bearing

☐ Weight-bearing as tolerated

Brace / precautions: _____

1

Weeks 0–4

Protect graft & control swelling

2

Weeks 4–6

Restore motion & normalize gait

3

6 Weeks

Full weight-bearing; crutches & brace discontinued

4

3 Months

Begin running program

5

6 Months

Begin cutting / sport drills

6

9–12 Months

Return to sports*

*Timing varies by sport — milestones above are goals, not guarantees; progression is criterion-based.

Phase 1

Weeks 0–4

Weight-Bearing: As tolerated with crutches (modified if a concomitant meniscal repair, meniscal transplant, or articular cartilage procedure was performed).

Range of Motion: Active-assisted range of motion (AAROM), progressing to active range of motion (AROM) as tolerated.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Quad sets and heel slides; gentle hamstring stretch at 1 week.
- Non-weight-bearing stretch of the gastrocnemius and soleus.
- Straight leg raises with brace locked in full extension, until quad strength prevents an extension lag.

Brace: Hinged knee brace, locked in full extension for ambulation and sleeping (weeks 0–2); unlocked for ambulation and removed for sleeping (weeks 2–6).

Phase 2

Weeks 4–6

Weight-Bearing: As tolerated; discontinue crutches at 6 weeks.

Range of Motion: Maintain full extension; work on progressive knee flexion.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Closed-chain extension exercises.
- Hamstring and gastrocnemius/soleus stretching.
- Progress to weight-bearing stretch of the gastrocnemius and soleus.
- Begin stationary bicycle.

Brace: Discontinue once the patient has achieved full extension with no evidence of extension lag.

Phase 3

Weeks 6–16

Weight-Bearing: Full.

Range of Motion: Full and painless.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Begin hamstring strengthening; gradually add resistance to open-chain hamstring exercises at 12 weeks.
- Advance closed-chain strengthening exercises and proprioception activities.
- Begin stairmaster / elliptical.
- May start ahead-running at 12 weeks.

Phase 4

Months 4–6

Range of Motion: Full and painless.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Continue quad and hamstring strengthening and flexibility work.
- Begin cutting exercises and sport-specific drills at 6 months.
- Maintenance program for strength and endurance.