

PT PROTOCOL

Posterior Cruciate Ligament (PCL) Reconstruction

Rehabilitation Protocol

Weight-Bearing Status

ONLY IF DIFFERENT FROM PROTOCOL BELOW

Weight-bearing status depends on which structures were addressed and any concomitant procedures 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; WB as tolerated, limited flexion

2

4–8 Weeks

WB advancing; brace progressively unlocked, then discontinued

3

6 Months

Full WB & ROM; begin jogging

4

9 Months

Begin cutting/sport drills; return to sports

Milestones above are goals, not guarantees; progression is criterion-based and depends on the structures addressed.

Phase 1

Weeks 0–4

Weight-Bearing: As tolerated with crutches, in full extension.

Brace: Hinged knee brace. Locked in full extension for ambulation and sleeping (weeks 0–1). Locked in full extension for ambulation and sleeping, removed for therapy and home exercises (weeks 1–4).

Range of Motion: Weeks 0–1: none. Weeks 1–2: PROM 0–30°. Weeks 2–4: PROM 0–90°. Maintain anterior pressure on the proximal tibia as the knee is flexed, weeks 1–4, to prevent posterior sag.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Avoid active hamstring activity and active knee extension from 90–70° until postop week 4.
- Quad and hamstring sets and ankle pumps.
- Straight leg raise with brace in full extension, until quad strength prevents an extension lag.
- Hip abduction/adduction – resistance must be proximal to the knee.
- Hamstring/calf stretch: calf press with theraband, progressing to standing toe raises with knee in full extension.

Phase 2

Weeks 4–12

Weight-Bearing: As tolerated; discontinue crutch use at 6–8 weeks.

Brace: Weeks 4–6: unlocked for gait training/exercise only. Weeks 6–8: unlocked for all activities. Week 8: discontinue brace.

Range of Motion: Maintain full extension; work on progressive knee flexion (goal of 110° by week 6).

Therapeutic Exercises

- Weeks 4–8: gait training, wall slides (0–30°), mini squats (0–30°), leg press (0–60°).
- Weeks 8–12: stationary bike (seat higher than normal), stairmaster, closed-chain terminal knee extension, leg press (0–90°), treadmill walking, balance and proprioception activities.

Phase 3

Months 3–9

Weight-Bearing: Full.

Range of Motion: Full and painless.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Advance closed-chain strengthening exercises; progressive proprioception/balance activities.
- Maintain flexibility.
- Treadmill walking, progressing to jogging at 6 months.

Phase 4

Months 9+

Goal: Return to sports as tolerated.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Maintain strength, endurance, and function — initiate plyometric program.
- Begin cutting exercises and sport-specific drills.
- Return to sports as tolerated.