

# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER ACL SURGERY



## WEEKS 0-2

Goals:

- Full extension\*\*
- Minimize pain
- Reduce swelling
- Quadriceps activation

## CRUTCH/BRACE USE

-Brace is worn at all times, except showering and physical therapy. (Brace MUST be worn while sleeping)

-If you had a meniscal repair- use crutches to assist with partial weight bearing until further notice

-If NO meniscal repair, use crutches for comfort and discontinue when you can walk with the brace pain free.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT

### REST

ICE - Every hour for 20 minutes for the first few days, then 20 minutes 3-4x a day

COMPRESSION- Continue with ACE bandage and stocking for 1-2 weeks

ELEVATION- Place bolster/pillow underneath calf/ankle to avoid knee bending

## EXERCISES

Gentle Range of Motion (ROM)  
Quad squeezes, heel slides, ankle pumps

## WEEKS 2-6

Goals:

- Walking normally- Start to wean off crutches (unless meniscal repair)
- 0 degrees-120 degrees ROM
- Build early strength, reduce swelling

## BRACE USE

-Remove brace while sleeping and resting on the couch

- Start to unlock the brace under the guidance of physical therapist based on your ability to straight leg raise without heel lag

## EXERCISES

Light closed-chain strengthening  
Mini squats, bridges, stationary bike

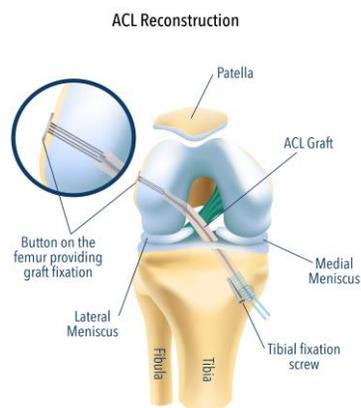
## WEEKS 6-12

- Full ROM
- Quad and Hamstring Strengthening
- Normal walking, no brace, no crutches

## EXERCISES

Open and closed-chain strengthening  
Step ups, lunges, balance training, resistance bands, pool exercises

\*\*Once you can demonstrate stability with step downs- you may be able start light jogging



## AFTER MONTH 3

Goals:

- Range of motion of surgical leg should be equal to the non surgical leg
- Strength of the surgical leg should be 70-75% or more of the non surgical leg
- Improve single-leg balance/proprioception

## MILESTONES

Months 3-6: Straight ahead jogging, plyometrics, agility

- Week 10-14: Forward/backward movement
- Week 15-18: Lateral movement
- Week 19-22: Multi-directional movement

Months 6-9: Cutting, pivoting, sprinting, jumping (once cleared)

Months 9-12: Return to Sport Clearance Test \*\*discuss bracing with MD\*\*

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Commit to physical therapy and at home exercise programs
- Don't rush- early return can cause re- injury
- Think about recovery one day at a time

## RISKS OF ACL SURGERY

- Stiffness or loss of motion in knee
- Reinjury to graft
- Infection, blood clots
- Knee pain or difficulty kneeling
- Numbness/ Tingling

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