



# **GOLDEN STATE ORTHOPEDICS & SPINE**

**POST-OPERATIVE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL FOR ACL AND POSTEROLATERAL CORNER RECONSTRUCTION**

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## **Phase 1: Weeks 0-6**

### **Goals:**

1. Maximum protection of grafts
2. Maintain patellar mobility
3. Maintain quadriceps tone
4. Maintain full passive extension
5. Control pain and swelling
6. Introduce early range of motion

### **Weight bearing:**

1. Non-weight bearing ambulation with crutches

### **Brace:**

1. Locked in extension 24 hours per day for 3 weeks  
3 weeks post-op, begin gentle passive range of motion out of brace.

These should be performed out of the brace for approximately 5-10 minutes, 3-4 times per day. The patient is cautioned against forcing excessive motion. Obtaining 90 degrees of knee flexion by the end of post-op week 6 is encouraged.

### **Ice:**

1. Ice 4-6 times per day for 15 - 30 minutes per session

### **Exercise Program:**

1. Strengthening
2. Quad sets - enhance with low intensity electrical stimulation of biofeedback
3. Hip abduction
4. Range of motion:
  - a. Patellar mobilizations
  - b. Ankle pumpsStretching exercises:
  - a. Gastrocnemius stretching
  - b. Gentle hamstring stretching

### **Other:**

1. Gentle scar massage should be performed once all sites are fully healed

## **Phase 2: Post-Operative Weeks 7-12**

### **Goals:**

1. Initiate weight bearing for articular cartilage nourishment
2. Increase knee flexion. Try to achieve 90 degrees of flexion by the end of post-operative week 9
3. Maintain quadriceps tone



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4. Improve proprioception
5. Avoid isolated quadriceps and hamstring contraction

### **Weight Bearing:**

1. Begin partial weight bearing with 25% body weight at week 6
2. Increase by 25% body weight per week over the next 4 weeks to full weight bearing by week 10

### **Brace:**

1. Unlock brace to full flexion
2. Continue to wear brace at night when sleeping
3. Discontinue brace at end of post-op week 12

### **Exercise Program:**

1. Passive flexion exercises:
  - a. Try to achieve 90 degrees of flexion by the end of post-op week 9
  - b. Allow range of motion beyond 90 degrees by post-op week 10
  - c. Try to achieve flexion to 120 degrees by the end of post-op week 12
2. Prone hangs
3. Patellar mobilization
4. High intensity E-stim at 60 degrees of knee flexion
5. Initiate closed chain strengthening once full weight bearing has been achieved and quadriceps strength is 3+ out of 5 or greater. Closed chain exercises should be performed from 0-60 degrees of flexion. Exercise including leg press, squats, and lunges.
6. Stationary bike for range of motion
7. Proprioception and weight shift (KAT or BAPS board)
8. Hip strengthening - No adduction of PCL is involved
9. To maintain cardiovascular fitness, rowing machines, stair climbers, and rapid walking on a treadmill may be initiated

### **Phase 3: Post-Op Months 4-6**

#### **Goals:**

1. Increase knee flexion. ROM should be from 0-120 degrees by the beginning of post-op month 4
2. Maintain full passive extension
3. Improve quadriceps and hamstring strength
4. Improve proprioception
5. Improve functional skills
6. Increase cardiovascular endurance



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## **POST-OPERATIVE PHYSICAL THERAPY PROTOCOL FOR ACL AND POSTEROLATERAL CORNER RECONSTRUCTION**

### **Exercise Program:**

#### **At 4 Months:**

1. Closed chain progressive resistance exercises. Avoid flexion beyond 70 degrees
2. Isolated quadriceps and hamstring exercises – NO resistance
3. Single-leg proprioception exercises (KAT, BAPS, mini-trampoline)
4. Closed chain conditioning exercises: stair climber, skiing machine, rower, etc.
5. Aggressive flexion range of motion: Consider manipulation if range of motion is less than 90 degrees by end of month 4
6. Hip progressive resistance exercises
7. Straight-line jogging is initiated at the end of post-op month 4

#### **At 5 Months:**

1. Initiate resisted quadriceps and hamstring exercises
2. Progress closed chain strengthening and conditioning exercises
3. Initiate low intensity plyometrics
4. Progress jogging and begin sprints
5. Advance proprioception training
6. Fit for ACL/PCL functional brace

#### **At 6 Months:**

1. Progression of all strengthening exercises and plyometrics
2. Begin agility drills in brace: carioca, figure 8s, zig-zag, slalom running, etc.
3. Sport-specific drills when the quadriceps and hamstring deficits are less than 20% of the contralateral side
4. Isokinetic testing at end of post-op month 6

### **Phase 4: Post-Operative Months 7-12**

#### **Exercise Program:**

1. Assess functional strength: Single-leg hop for distance, timed hop test, shuttle run, etc.
2. Return to sports if the following criteria are met:
  - a. Minimal or no pain or swelling
  - b. Isokinetic and functional tests within 10-15% of the uninvolved side
  - c. Proprioception equal to the contralateral side
  - d. Successful completion of sport-specific drills
  - e. ACL/PCL functional brace