

ACL AUTOGRAFT RECONSTRUCTION REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

PHASE I (0–4 weeks)

Weight Bearing: As tolerated with crutches*

Brace:

- 0–1 week: Locked in full extension for ambulation and sleeping
- 1–4 weeks: Unlocked for ambulation; remove for sleeping**

Range of Motion (ROM): As tolerated

Exercises:

- Heel slides
 - Quadriceps/hamstring sets
 - Patellar mobilizations
 - Gastrocnemius/soleus stretch
 - Straight leg raises with brace in full extension until quad strength prevents extension lag
 - Side-lying hip/core exercises
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PHASE II (4–12 weeks)

Weight Bearing: Full, progressing to normal gait pattern

Brace: Discontinue at day 28 or earlier if patient has no extension lag

ROM: Maintain full extension and progressive flexion

Exercises:

- Weight-bearing gastrocnemius/soleus stretch
- Toe raises
- Closed chain extension exercises
- Balance exercises
- Hamstring curls
- Stationary bike

- Step-ups
 - Front and side planks
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PHASE III (12–16 weeks)

Weight Bearing: Full, without use of crutches; normalized gait pattern

Brace: None

ROM: Gain full and pain-free motion

Exercises:

- Advance closed chain strengthening
 - Progress proprioception activities
 - Stairmaster, elliptical, and straight-ahead running beginning at 12 weeks
 - Hip/core exercises
 - Pool therapy
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PHASE IV (16–24 weeks)

Weight Bearing: Full

Brace: None

ROM: Full and pain-free

Exercises:

- 16 weeks: Begin jumping
 - 20 weeks: Advance running to sprinting, backward running, cutting/pivoting/changing direction; initiate plyometric program and sport-specific drills
 - 22 weeks: Advance as tolerated
 - FSA completed at 22 weeks***
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PHASE V (>6 months)

Weight Bearing: Full

Brace: None

ROM: Full and pain-free

Exercises:

- Gradual return to sports participation after completion of FSA
 - Maintenance program based on FSA
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* Modified with concomitantly performed meniscus repair/transplantation or articular cartilage procedure

** Brace may be removed for sleeping after first post-operative visit (day 7–10)

**FULL RETURN TO SPORT (FULL CONTACT) NO SOONER THAN 9 MONTHS POST
OP AND MUST FOLLOW UP WITH SURGEON PRIOR TO FULL CLEARANCE**