

Physical Therapy Protocol Following Achilles Tendon Repair – West, Bryant, Giuliani

Weight Bearing Status – Non-weight bearing in cast/splint for 2 weeks

Transition to boot with 30⁰ dorsiflexion at week 3; increase by 10⁰ of dorsiflexion every week over the next 3-4 weeks, progressing to FWB by week 6; transition into regular shoe at weeks 6-9

Post-Op Weeks 0-2:

Goals:

1. Minimize swelling and pain
2. Wound healing
3. Good quad control, full hip and knee ROM

Exercises:

1. Toe curls and wiggles

Post-Op Weeks 2-3:

Goals:

1. Continued wound healing
2. Gradually restore ROM

Exercises:

1. NWB gastroc stretch to dorsiflexion to 0⁰, plantar flexion (gravity), ROM circles

Post-Op Weeks 3-6:

Goals:

1. Progress to FWB in boot with heel lift as tolerated
2. Restore normal gait
3. NO passive stretching beyond 0⁰

Exercises:

1. Weight shifts in boot (gradually increase to multi-directional)
2. Passive plantar flexion
3. Multi-directional SLRs

Post-Op Weeks 6-9:

Goals:

1. Establish normal gait without crutches
2. Begin strengthening
3. Wean into regular shoe with heel lift as needed

Exercises:

1. Begin calf strengthening
2. Slowly progress passive ROM; can initiate active plantar flexion at week 8
3. Bilateral eccentric and normal calf raise gradually progressing weight bearing

Post-Op Weeks 9-12:

Goals:

1. Discontinue use of heel lift in regular shoe
2. Full AROM and gentle PROM in all planes
3. Begin and gradually increase active and resistive exercises
4. Advance with strengthening and proprioception

Exercises:

1. Progress strengthening on stable and unstable surfaces with eccentric control
2. Bilateral LE shuttle plyometrics
3. Begin Stairmaster

Post-Op Months 3-6:

Goals:

1. Enhance muscular strength and endurance
2. Gradually return to recreational activities

Exercises:

1. Controlled squats and lunges, bilateral calf raises
2. Proprioception on stable and unstable surface (BAPS)
3. Golf at 4-5 months (chipping and putting)

Post-Op Months 6-9:

Goals:

1. Progress to all sports and physically demanding jobs

Exercises:

1. Progress to jogging and then running
*Criteria to begin jogging:
Hop 10 times, audible symmetry with foot strike and normalized functional ROM
2. Plyometrics- Box jumps (6" and 12"), stair running, progress with eccentric loading
3. Mini trampoline bouncing
4. Sports-specific drills. Cutting, pivoting; start at 25% of speed and progress as tolerated

Criteria for release to sport(s):

- 1. ROM is symmetric and painless**
- 2. Strength is 90% of contralateral side**
- 3. No swelling or instability**
- 4. Able to perform all sport-specific drills**