Rehab Practice Guidelines for:
ACL Reconstruction

Assumptions:  
1. Isolated ACL Injury  
2. Autograft (See specific graft types for precautions)

Primary Surgery  
ACL Reconstruction

Secondary Surgery (possible):  
See precautions section for modifications related to

Expected # of visits  
16-38

NMES Guideline:  
1. Electrodes placed over proximal lateral quadriceps and distal medial quadriceps. (Modify distal electrode placement by not covering superior medial (VMO) arthroscopy portal until stitches removed and skin is healed)
2. Stimulation parameters: 2500Hz, 75 bursts, 2 sec. ramp, 12 sec. on, 50 sec. rest, intensity to max tolerable [at least 50% MVIC (see note at end)], 10 contractions per session. 3 sessions per week until quadriceps strength MVIC is 80% of uninvolved.
3. Stimulation performed isometrically at 60° (dependent on graft site)
Pre-operative Goals: Full knee extension range of motion (ROM), absent or minimal effusion, and no knee extension lag with straight leg raise (SLR)

### ACL Rehabilitation Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase of Rehabilitation</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
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</table>
| **Immediate Postoperative (Week 1)** | ▪ Wall slides  
▪ Patellar mobilization  
▪ Gait training  
▪ NMES  
▪ Bike for ROM  
\(\text{Treatment/HEP:}\)  
▪ Supine wall slides  
▪ Self-patellar mobs (30-50x/day)  
▪ Quad sets  
▪ Long arc quads (90-45°)  
▪ Straight Leg Raise 3x10 (3x/day) | ▪ AROM/PROM = 0-90\(^{\circ}\)  
▪ Active quadriceps contraction with superior patellar glide |
| **Early Postoperative (Week 2)** | ▪ Step ups in pain free range  
▪ Portal/incision mobilization as needed (if skin is healed)  
▪ Stairmaster  
▪ Wall squats/sits  
▪ Progress to functional brace as swelling permits  
▪ Prone hangs if lacking full extension  
▪ PF mobilization in flexion (if flexion limited) | ▪ Flexion >110\(^{\circ}\)  
▪ Walking without crutches  
▪ Use of cycle/stair climber without difficulty  
▪ Walking with full extension  
▪ Reciprocal stair climbing  
▪ KOS ADL > 65% |
| **Intermediate Postoperative (Weeks 3-5)** | ▪ Tibiofemoral mobilization with rotation if limited  
▪ Progress bike and stair master duration (10-minute minimum)  
▪ Begin Balance and proprioceptive activities | ▪ Flexion to within 10° of uninvolved side  
▪ Quad strength > 60% uninvolved |
| **Late Postoperative (Weeks 6-8)** | ▪ Progress exercises in intensity and duration  
▪ Begin running progression*: on treadmill with functional brace (may vary with MD)*  
▪ Transfer to fitness facility*  
\(\text{If all milestones are met}\)  
\(\text{see running progression below}\) | ▪ Quad strength >80%  
▪ Normal gait pattern  
▪ Full ROM (compared to uninvolved)  
▪ Effusion ≤ trace |
| **Transitional (Weeks 9-12)** | ▪ Sports specific activities  
▪ Agility exercises  
▪ Functional testing (see description below)  
\(\text{Follow up Functional Testing:}\)  
\(\text{o} 4\text{-month, 5\text{-month, 6\text{-month, 1\text{-year post-op.}}\)}  
\(\text{o} \text{Recommending changes in rehab PRN.}  
\text{Progression may include one-legged emphasis in gym, explosive types of activities (cutting, jumping, plyometrics)\)}} | ▪ Maintaining or gaining quadriceps strength (>80%)  
▪ Hop tests >85% (see attached)  
▪ KOS Sports questionnaire >70%  
▪ Maintaining gains in strength (≥ 90% to 100%)  
▪ Hop Test (≥ 90% to 100%)  
▪ KOS Sports (≥ 80% to 100%) |

* optional for clarification/citation

**MVIC:** Maximum Volitional Isometric Contraction  
Patient is asked to volitionally extend the involved leg as hard as possible while knee is maintained isometrically at 60° knee flexion. Side to side comparison: (involved/uninvolved X 100 = % MVC)
### Precautions

<table>
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<th>Surgical Procedure</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
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| Patellar tendon graft technique           | ▪ Be aware of patellofemoral forces and possible irritation during PRE’s.  
▪ Treat patellofemoral pain if it arises with modalities, possible patellar taping.  
▪ Consider alteration of knee flexion angle to most comfortable between 45-60° for MVIC and NMES treatments |
| Hamstring tendon graft technique          | ▪ No resisted hamstring strengthening until week 12.                                                                                           |
| Partial meniscectomy                      | ▪ No modifications required; progress per patient tolerance and protocol.                                                                     |
| Meniscal Repair                           | ▪ No weight-bearing flexion beyond 45° for 4 weeks.  
▪ Weight bearing in full extension OK  
▪ Seated Kinetron and multi angle quadriceps isometric can substitute for weight-bearing exercises. |
| Concomitant Abrasion Chondroplasty        | ▪ WBAT with Axillary crutches 3-5 days                                                                                                       |
| Concomitant Microfracture                 | ▪ NWB-ing 2-4 weeks with Axillary crutches  
▪ No weightbearing activities in treatment for 4 weeks  
  ▪ “Consider location and size of lesion for exercise specific alterations”             |
| Chondral Repair (OATS, ACI, MACI)         | ▪ Follow procedure specific protocol if done concomitantly                                                                                  |
| Meniscal Transplantation                  | ▪ Follow procedure specific protocol if done concomitantly                                                                                  |
| MCL injury                                | ▪ Restrict motion to sagittal plane until week 4-6 to allow healing of MCL.  
▪ Perform PRE’s with tibia in internal rotation during early post-op period to decrease MCL stress.  
▪ Consider brace for exercise and periods of activity if severe sprain and/or patient has pain,  
  ▪ Non-Repaired ROM restrictions:  
  ▪ Gr 1: no ROM restrictions  
  ▪ Gr 2: 0-90° week 1, 0-110° week 2  
  ▪ Gr 3: 0-30° week 1, 0-90° week 2, 0-110° week 3 |
| PCL injury                                | ▪ Follow PCL rehabilitation guidelines. (Not ACL protocol)                                                                                   |
| Posterolateral corner repair              | ▪ Minimize external rotation torques and varus stress 6-8 weeks  
▪ Avoid hyper-extension  
▪ No resisted Knee flexion 12 weeks                                                       |
| ACL revision                              | ▪ Delay progression of running, hop testing, agility drills, and return to sport by 4 weeks.  
▪ Crutches and immobilizer will be used 2 weeks following surgery.  
▪ Otherwise follow same milestones                                                        |
Running Progression: (requires trace or less effusion, 80% or > strength, understand soreness rules)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Treadmill</th>
<th>Track</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>0.1 mile walk/0.1 mile Jog repeat 10 times</td>
<td>Jog straights/Walk Curves (2 miles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Alternate 0.1 mile walk/0.2mile jog (2 miles)</td>
<td>Jog straights/Jog 1 curve every other lap (2 miles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>Alternate 0.1 mile walk/0.3 mile jog (2 miles)</td>
<td>Jog straights/Jog 1 curve every lap (2 miles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Alternate 0.1 mile walk/0.4 mile jog (2 miles)</td>
<td>Jog 1⅔ lap/Walk curve (2 miles)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Jog full 2 miles</td>
<td>Jog all laps (2 miles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>Increase workout to 2 ½ miles</td>
<td>Increase workout to 2½ miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 7</td>
<td>Increase workout to 3 miles</td>
<td>Increase workout to 3 miles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 8</td>
<td>Alternate between running/jogging every 0.25 miles</td>
<td>Increase speed on straights/jog curves</td>
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Progress to next level when patient is able to perform activity for 2 miles without increased effusion or pain. Perform no more than 4 times in one week and no more frequently than every other day. Do not progress more than 2 levels in a 7-day period.

Functional Testing (Week 12)
Testing: Patient performs one practice on each leg for each hop sequence. Patient performs 2 timed or measured trials on each leg for each hop sequence. Measured trials are averaged and compared involved to uninvolved for single, triple, crossover hop. Compare uninvolved to involved for timed hop.

Passing Criteria for Return to Sport: Greater than or equal to 90% on: quadriceps MVIC, hop testing, KOS-ADLS score, and Global Rating of knee function score.

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References


