

MPFL Reconstruction

Physical Therapy Protocol

Phase I – Maximum Protection (Weeks 0–2)

Goals:

- Protect the surgical repair
- Control swelling and pain
- Begin early controlled ROM
- Prevent quadriceps atrophy

Restrictions:

- **Weight Bearing:** Toe-touch weight bearing (TTWB) for 6 weeks
- **ROM Limit:** 0°–90° PROM
- **Brace:** Locked in full extension (0°) at all times except during therapy

Exercises:

- Flexion/Extension – wall slides
- Flexion/Extension – seated
- Patella/Tendon mobilization (no medial/lateral glides)
- Extension mobilization
- Quad sets
- Ankle pumps
- Sit and reach for hamstrings (towel)
- Balance series (gentle)

Cardiovascular:

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- Bike/Rowing with well leg only

Phase II – Controlled Motion (Weeks 3–6)

Goals:

- Restore ROM beyond 90°
- Begin neuromuscular activation
- Maintain lower extremity mobility

Updated Restrictions:

- Brace unlocked as tolerated in therapy
- PROM may exceed 90° as tolerated
- Maintain TTWB status

Exercises:

- Continue Phase I exercises
- Begin hamstring sets
- Toe and heel raises
- Increase intensity of balance series
- Double knee bends (as tolerated)
- Bike with both legs – no resistance
- Aquajogging (gentle)

Cardiovascular:

- Bike with both legs (no resistance)
- Aquajogging
- Treadmill – walking on incline (7%)

Phase III – Progressive Strengthening (Weeks 7–12)

Goals:

- Build lower extremity strength
- Enhance neuromuscular control
- Initiate dynamic movements

Updated Restrictions:

- May transition to FWB if cleared at Week 6
- Gradual brace weaning

Exercises:

- Continue all prior mobility and strengthening drills
- Begin resistance on bike
- Add elliptical trainer
- Begin:
 - Double leg bridges
 - Reverse lunges (static hold)
 - Resistance cord work
 - Balance squats
 - Single leg deadlifts
 - Leg press (light resistance)
 - Rowing machine
 - Swimming with fins
 - Stair stepper

Phase IV – Advanced Strengthening and Return to Impact (Weeks 13–20)

Goals:

- Improve dynamic stability

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- Prepare for return to athletic drills
- Normalize strength and gait pattern

Exercises:

- Increase resistance and reps for all previous exercises
- Initiate running progression:
 - Single-plane drills (Week 12–16)
 - Multi-directional progression (Week 16–20)
- Functional sports test training begins
- Advanced balance and plyometric drills

Cardiovascular/Agility:

- Outdoor biking
- Hiking
- Snowshoeing

Phase V – Return to Sport and High-Level Activities (Weeks 20–24+)

Goals:

- Full strength, endurance, and coordination
- Return to unrestricted activity or sport

Exercises:

- Final stages of agility training
- Functional sports test completion
- High-level recreational activities:
 - Golf
 - Skiing
 - Basketball
 - Tennis

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