

Patellofemoral Cartilage Restoration

Physical Therapy Protocol

Phase I – Protection / Mobility (Post-Op Weeks 1–3)

Goals:

- Protect the surgical site
- Initiate gentle motion within protected range
- Activate quadriceps and VMO
- Begin safe mobility with assistive devices

Restrictions:

- PROM and AROM 0–20° (Week 1)
- PROM and AROM 0–60° (Weeks 2–3)
- Brace locked in extension unless performing exercises

Therapeutic Exercises:

- Isometric quadriceps sets
- Straight leg raises (SLR)

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- Weight shifts in standing
- Patellar mobilizations
- Ankle pumps

Phase II – Strength (Post-Op Weeks 4–6)

Goals:

- Improve AROM
- Restore basic gait pattern
- Initiate controlled strengthening

Restrictions:

- Continue brace as needed, unlock as quad control improves
- Avoid open-chain resistance to the knee joint

Therapeutic Exercises:

- AROM to 0–125°
- Gait training with progressive weight bearing
- Stationary cycling for ROM (no resistance)

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- Mini squats (pain-free)
 - Single-leg balance drills
 - Closed-chain quad/glute strengthening
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Phase III – Dynamic Strength (Post-Op Weeks 7–12)

Goals:

- Achieve full AROM
- Normalize gait pattern
- Improve dynamic lower limb control

Milestones:

- Discontinue crutches and TROM brace
- Independent ambulation without gait deviations

Therapeutic Exercises:

- Step-ups and step-downs
- Lateral and diagonal movements
- Progressive resistance exercises for quads/glutes

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- Core strengthening
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Phase IV – Proprioceptive Phase (Post-Op Weeks 13–24)

Goals:

- Enhance neuromuscular control
- Improve balance and proprioception
- Increase functional strength

Therapeutic Activities:

- Single-leg balance on unstable surfaces
 - Closed kinetic chain training
 - Ergometers, elliptical, and stairmaster (as tolerated)
 - Agility ladders and cone drills (if appropriate)
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Phase V – Functional Return (Post-Op Month 6+)

Goals:

- Safely return to higher-level activities

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- Prepare for sports or recreational return

Functional Progression:

- Begin running program (if cleared)
- Integrate plyometric and impact control drills
- Sport-specific exercises and interval training

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