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Partial Meniscectomy/chondroplasty

Postop Protocol

Phase 1: Immediate Postoperative (0–1 week)

Goals: Control pain/swelling, restore full extension, initiate early mobility, and normalize gait pattern.

- **Weight Bearing:** Weight bearing as tolerated (WBAT) with or without crutches; discontinue crutches when gait is normal.
- **ROM:**
 - Immediate full extension encouraged
 - Flexion as tolerated, no restrictions unless otherwise specified
- **Exercises:**
 - Quadiceps sets
 - Straight leg raises
 - Heel slides
 - Ankle pumps
- **Precautions:** Avoid prolonged standing or walking during first few days to limit swelling.

Phase 2: Early Rehabilitation (1–3 weeks)

Goals: Achieve full, pain-free ROM; regain normal gait; reduce swelling.

- **Weight Bearing:** WBAT without assistive devices when safe and pain-free.
- **ROM:** Full, pain-free motion by week 2–3.
- **Exercises:**
 - Stationary bike (low resistance)
 - Closed-chain strengthening (mini-squats, step-ups)
 - Hamstring and calf stretching
 - Patellar mobilizations
- **Precautions:** Avoid high-impact activities and deep squats $>90^\circ$ flexion.

Phase 3: Strengthening and Functional Training (3–6 weeks)

Goals: Improve lower extremity strength, balance, and functional mobility.

- **Strengthening:**
 - Progressive resistance training (leg press $\leq 90^\circ$ flexion, hamstring curls, hip strengthening)

- Step-downs and lunges (within pain-free range)
- **Neuromuscular Training:**
 - Balance board
 - Single-leg stance drills
- **Cardio:**
 - Elliptical, swimming, cycling
- **Precautions:** Monitor for swelling and pain; adjust load accordingly.

Phase 4: Return to Activity (6+ weeks)

Goals: Return to full activity and sports as tolerated.

- **Strengthening:** Continue progressive loading of lower extremity
- **Plyometrics:** Jumping, hopping, and agility drills if pain-free and swelling-free
- **Sport-Specific Drills:** Cutting, pivoting, sprinting progression as tolerated
- **Criteria for Return:**
 - Full, pain-free ROM
 - No swelling after exercise
 - Strength $\geq 90\%$ of contralateral side

Key Evidence Notes:

- Early mobilization and weight bearing after partial meniscectomy improve outcomes without increasing complications (Logerstedt et al., 2022).
- Chondroplasty recovery depends on defect size; for small focal lesions, return to sport is often possible within 6–8 weeks (Cole et al., 2021).
- Closed-chain strengthening and neuromuscular training improve long-term joint function and reduce reinjury risk (van der Graaff et al., 2018).