

Evan D. Boyd, MD
Knee, Shoulder, & Sports Medicine Surgeon
518-489-2663 ext 5215

REHABILITATION PROTOCOL: Osteochondral Autograft/Allograft Transfer System (OATS) Procedure and Osteochondral Fracture Fixation

This protocol is intended to guide clinicians through the post-operative course for OATS procedure, a method for autogenous/allograft hyaline cartilage resurfacing of full thickness chondral defects of the weightbearing areas of the femoral condyle. This protocol is time based (dependent on tissue healing) as well as criterion based. Additionally, the location of the surgery is critical to safeguard against potentially harmful forces early in the rehabilitation process. Specific intervention should be based on the needs of the individual and should consider exam findings and clinical decision making. The timeframes for expected outcomes contained within this guideline may vary based on surgeon's preference, additional procedures performed, and/or complications. If a clinician requires assistance in the progression of a post-operative patient, they should consult with the referring surgeon.

The interventions included within this protocol are not intended to be an inclusive list of exercises. Therapeutic interventions should be included and modified based on the progress of the patient and under the discretion of the clinician.

Post-operative considerations

Many different factors influence post-operative rehabilitation outcomes, including location, size, depth, and containment of the lesion(s), as well as presence of concomitant injury. This protocol distinguishes between condylar and patellofemoral lesions as there are considerations unique to each. However, it is recommended that clinicians utilize their clinical judgment and collaborate closely with the referring physician throughout the rehabilitation process.

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PHASE I: IMMEDIATE POST-OP (0-6 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY)

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain strength and flexibility of uninvolved leg ▪ Control post-operative swelling and pain ▪ Respect weightbearing restrictions to protect surgical leg
Weight Bearing	<p>Walking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crutches and hinged knee orthosis locked in extension with ambulation for all lesions ▪ Non-weightbearing for at least 2 weeks for all lesion ▪ Initiation of partial weightbearing is dependent on the location, size, and condition of the recipient site. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When the site is a posterior condylar lesion or a patellofemoral lesion, partial weightbearing is allowed at 2 weeks. ○ When the recipient site is located antero-central, partial weightbearing is allowed at 2 weeks for a small defect, 3 weeks for a medium-sized defect, and at 4 weeks for a large defect. ○ For fixation of an osteochondral fracture, partial weightbearing is allowed at 4 weeks ▪ Full weightbearing is allowed by 6-10 weeks depending on condition
Interventions	<p>Swelling Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ice, compression, elevation (check with MD re: cold therapy) ▪ Retrograde massage ▪ Ankle pumps <p>Range of motion/Mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuous Passive Motion (CPM): Immediately post-operative, perform 6-8 hours/day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Start at 0-60 degrees for condylar lesions and patellofemoral lesions 6 cm². Progress 5-10 degrees/day. ○ If no CPM, perform wall slides ~500 repetitions, 3x/day ▪ Passive range of motion (PROM) and active-assisted range of motion (AAROM) facilitating knee flexion and extension in protected ranges of motion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Condylar lesions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Week 2: 0-90 degrees ▪ Week 3: 0-105 degrees ▪ Week 4: 0-115 degrees ▪ Week 5-6: 0-125 degrees ○ Patellofemoral lesions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Week 2-3: 0-90 degrees ▪ Week 4: 0-105 degrees ▪ Week 5-6: 120 degrees ▪ Hamstring and calf stretching with knee extended

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Patellar mobilization <p>Strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Calf raises ▪ Quad sets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Functional electrical stimulation (as needed for trace to poor quadriceps control) NMES high intensity (2500 Hz, 75 bursts) supine knee extended 10 sec/50 sec, 10 contractions, 2x/wk during sessions—use of clinical stimulator during session, consider home units distributed immediate post op ▪ 4-way straight leg raise (SLR) ▪ Active knee extensions 90-40 degrees for condylar lesions only ▪ Resisted plantarflexion in long sitting <p>Additional Therapeutic Exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upper body ergometer (UBE)
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimal pain and swelling ▪ Compliance with weightbearing restriction ▪ Achievement of range of motion goals (see above) ▪ Quad contraction with superior patella glide and full active extension ▪ Able to perform SLR without extension lag

PHASE II: INTERMEDIATE POST-OP (6-12 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY)

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect surgical leg with appropriate weightbearing ▪ Restore range of motion ▪ Control swelling ▪ Normalize gait
Weightbearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crutches and hinged knee orthosis unlocked with ambulation ▪ Progress to full weightbearing by Weeks 6-10 depending on condition
Additional Interventions *Continue with Phase I interventions	<p>Range of motion/Mobility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discontinue CPM at 8 weeks ▪ Continue with PROM and AAROM from 0-120 degrees ▪ Active range of motion (AROM) in protected range of motion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Condylar lesions: active knee extensions 0-90 degrees beginning at Week 8 ○ Patellofemoral lesions: active knee extensions 0-30 degrees beginning at Week 12 <p>Strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Condylar lesions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mini squats 0-60 degrees at Week 8

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leg press 0-90 degrees at Week 10 ▪ Patellofemoral lesions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mini squats 0-45 degrees at Week 8 ○ Leg press 0-60 degrees at Week 10 ▪ Glute bridges in protected range of motion depending on lesion location ▪ Standing resisted knee flexion in protected range of motion as indicated ▪ Clamshells ▪ Standing calf raises <p>Balance/proprioception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Weight shifting ▪ Ambulation over level ground ▪ Treadmill training <p>Conditioning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stationary cycling ▪ Water activities (upon wound closure and clearance from MD), with gradually increasing knee flexion, with gradual progression from freestyle to breast stroke or side kick
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full, pain-free active and passive range of motion ▪ Typical gait pattern over level ground

PHASE III: LATE POST-OP (3-5 MONTHS AFTER SURGERY)

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to protect surgical leg ▪ Maintain full ROM ▪ Safely progress strengthening ▪ Promote proper movement patterns ▪ Avoid post exercise pain/swelling ▪ Avoid activities that produce pain
Weightbearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Full weightbearing without hinged orthosis
Additional Interventions *Continue with Phase I-II Interventions	<p>Strengthening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lumbopelvic strengthening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bridge & unilateral bridge ○ Sidelying hip external rotationclamshell ○ Bridges on physioball ○ Bridge on physioball with roll-in ○ Bridge on physioball alternating ○ Hip hike <p>*The following exercises to focus on proper control with emphasis on good proximal stability</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Squat to chair ▪ Lateral lunges ▪ Romanian deadlift ▪ Single leg progression: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ partial weight bearing single leg press ○ slide board lunges: retro and lateral ○ step ups and step ups with march ○ lateral step-ups ○ step downs ○ single leg squats ○ single leg wall slides <p>Balance/proprioception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Single leg standing balance (knee slightly flexed) static progressed to dynamic and level progressed to unsteady surface ▪ Lateral step-overs ▪ Joint position re-training ▪ Perturbation training <p>Conditioning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stationary cycling ▪ Elliptical ▪ Treadmill training (incline, decline, intervals) ▪ Stair climber ▪ Interval running program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Return to Running Program
<p>Criteria to Progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No effusion/swelling/pain after exercise ▪ Normal gait ▪ ROM equal to contra lateral side ▪ Symmetrical Joint position sense (< 5-degree margin of error)

PHASE IV: TRANSITIONAL (5-6 MONTHS AFTER SURGERY)

<p>Rehab Goals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain full ROM ▪ Safely progress strengthening ▪ Promote proper movement patterns ▪ Avoid post exercise pain/swelling ▪ Avoid activities that produce pain at graft donor site
<p>Additional Interventions *Continue with</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Begin sub-max sport specific training in the sagittal plane ▪ Bilateral partial weightbearing (PWB) plyometrics progressed to full weightbearing (FWB) plyometrics

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Phase II-III interventions	
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No episodes of instability ▪ Maintain quad strength ▪ 10 repetitions single leg squat proper form through at least 60 deg knee flexion ▪ Drop vertical jump with good control ▪ KOOS-sports questionnaire >70% ▪ Functional Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quadriceps index >80%; HHD or isokinetic testing 60d/s ○ Hamstrings ≥80%; HHD or isokinetic testing 60 d/s ○ Glut med, glut max index ≥80% HHD

PHASE V: EARLY RETURN TO SPORT (6+ MONTHS AFTER SURGERY)

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safely progress strengthening ▪ Safely initiate sport specific training program ▪ Promote proper movement patterns ▪ Avoid post exercise pain/swelling ▪ Avoid activities that produce pain at graft donor site
Additional Interventions *Continue with Phase II-IV interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress to plyometric and agility program (with functional brace if prescribed) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Agility and Plyometric Program (See below)
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearance from MD and ALL milestone criteria below have been met ▪ Completion jog/run program without pain/effusion / swelling ▪ Functional Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quad/HS/glut index ≥90%; HHD mean or isokinetic testing @ 60d/s ○ Hamstring/Quad ratio ≥66% ○ Hop Testing ≥90% compared to contra lateral side, demonstrating good landing mechanics ▪ KOOS-sports questionnaire >90% ▪ International Knee Committee Subjective Knee Evaluation >93 ▪ Psych Readiness to Return to Sport (PRRS)

PHASE VI: UNRESTRICTED RETURN TO SPORT (8-12 MONTHS AFTER SURGERY)

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue strengthening and proprioceptive exercises ▪ Symmetrical performance with sport specific drills ▪ Safely progress to full sport
Additional Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-plane sport specific plyometrics program ▪ Multi-plane sport specific agility program

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*Continue with Phase II-V interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include hard cutting and pivoting depending on the individuals' goals (~7-9 mo) ▪ Non-contact practice→ Full practice→ Full play (~9-12 mo)
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Last stage, no additional criteria

**Acknowledgement: This rehab protocol was largely adopted from the protocols at MGH Sports Medicine Physical Therapy, which can be found at <https://www.massgeneral.org/orthopaedics/sports-medicine/physical-therapy/sports-rehab-protocols>*

Return to Running Program

This program is designed as a guide for clinicians and patients through a progressive return-to-run program. Patients should demonstrate > 80% on the Functional Assessment prior to initiating this program (after a knee ligament or meniscus repair). Specific recommendations should be based on the needs of the individual and should consider clinical decision making. If you have questions, contact the referring physician.

PHASE I: WARM UP WALK 15 MINUTES, COOL DOWN WALK 10 MINUTES Day 1 2 3 4 5 6

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Week 1	Walk 5 min, Jog 1 min x 5 reps		Walk 5 min, Jog 1 min x 5 reps		Walk 4 min, Jog 2 min x 5 reps		Walk 4 min, Jog 2 min x 5 reps
Week 2		Walk 3 min, Jog 3 min x 5 reps		Walk 3 min, Jog 3 min x 5 reps		Walk 2 min, Jog 4 min x 5 reps	
Week 3	Walk 2 min, Jog 4 min x 5 reps		Walk 1 min, Jog 5 min x 5 reps		Walk 1 min, Jog 5 min x 5 reps		Return to Run

**Only progress if there is no pain or swelling during or after the run

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PHASE II: WARM UP WALK 15 MINUTES, COOL DOWN WALK 10 MINUTES

Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Week 1	20 min		20 min		20 min		25 min
Week 2		25 min		25 min		30 min	
Week 3	30 min		30 min		35 min		35 min
Week 4		35 min		40 min		40 min	
Week 5	40 min		45 min		45 min		45 min
Week 6		50 min		50 min		50 min	
Week 7	55 min		55 min		55 min		60 min
Week 8		60 min		60 min			

Recommendations

- Runs should occur on softer surfaces during Phase I
- Non-impact activity on off days
- Goal is to increase mileage and then increase pace; avoid increasing two variables at once
- 10% rule: no more than 10% increase in mileage per week

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Agility and Plyometric Program

This program is designed as a guide for clinicians and patients through a progressive series of agility and plyometric exercises to promote successful return to sport and reduce injury risk. Patients should demonstrate > 80% on the Functional Assessment prior to initiating this program. Specific intervention should be based on the needs of the individual and should consider clinical decision making. If you have questions, contact the referring physician.

PHASE I: ANTERIOR PROGRESSION

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safely recondition the knee ▪ Provide a logical sequence of progressive drills for pre-sports conditioning
Agility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forward run ▪ Backward run ▪ Forward lean in to a run ▪ Forward run with 3-step deceleration ▪ Figure 8 run ▪ Circle run ▪ Ladder
Plyometrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shuttle press: Double leg alternating leg single leg jumps ▪ Double leg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jumps on to a box jump off of a box jumps on/off box ○ Forward jumps, forward jump to broad jump ○ Tuck jumps ○ Backward/forward hops over line/cone ▪ Single leg (these exercises are challenging and should be considered for more advanced athletes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Progressive single leg jump tasks ○ Bounding run ○ Scissor jumps ○ Backward/forward hops over line/cone
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No increase in pain or swelling ▪ Pain-free during loading activities ▪ Demonstrates proper movement patterns

PHASE II: LATERAL PROGRESSION

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safely recondition the knee ▪ Provide a logical sequence of progressive drills for the Level 1 sport athlete
Agility *Continue with Phase I interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Side shuffle ▪ Carioca ▪ Crossover steps ▪ Shuttle run

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Zig-zag run ▪ Ladder
Plyometrics *Continue with Phase I interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Double leg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lateral jumps over line/cone ○ Lateral tuck jumps over cone ▪ Single leg (these exercises are challenging and should be considered for more advanced athletes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lateral jumps over line/cone ○ Lateral jumps with sport cord
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No increase in pain or swelling ▪ Pain-free during loading activities ▪ Demonstrates proper movement patterns

PHASE III: MULTIPLANAR PROGRESSION

Rehab Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge the Level 1 sport athlete in preparation for final clearance for return to sport
Agility *Continue with Phase I-II interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Box drill ▪ Star drill ▪ Side shuffle with hurdles
Plyometrics *Continue with Phase I-II interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Box jumps with quick change of direction ▪ 90 and 180 degree jumps
Criteria to Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearance from MD ▪ Functional Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Quad/HS/glut index $\geq 90\%$ contra lateral side (isokinetic testing if available) ○ Hamstring/Quad ratio $\geq 70\%$ ○ Hop Testing $\geq 90\%$ contralateral side ▪ KOOS-sports questionnaire $>90\%$ ▪ International Knee Committee Subjective Knee Evaluation >93 ▪ Psych Readiness to Return to Sport (PRRS)