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Achilles Tendon Repair Rehabilitation Protocol

Phase I – Weeks 0 – 4

Goals

Protect the tendon repair

Control pain and swelling

Precautions

Non or toe touch weight bearing

- No physical therapy or ankle range of motion (ROM) for 0 – 2 weeks
- Stay in splint at all times for 0 – 2 weeks
- Walker boot with 1 inch heel lift 2 – 4 weeks at all times except for hygiene and exercises
- At 2 weeks may begin
 - Active dorsiflexion (DF) to neutral only and with knee flexed, no active plantarflexion (PF)
 - Hip and knee strengthening WITH BRACE ON: straight leg raises, hip abduction leg raises,
 - Joint mobilization – NO passive heel cord stretching
 - Stationary bicycle with brace on

Phase II – Weeks 4 – 8

Goals

Protect repair

Progress to full weight bearing

Regain ankle range of motion

Precautions

Progress to weight bearing as tolerated in walker boot with 1 inch heel lift for 2 weeks, then decrease to ½ inch heel lift

- Ankle eversion / inversion ROM; ankle passive plantarflexion ROM
- Increase active ankle dorsiflexion until gentle stretch of Achilles
- Continue hip and knee strengthening with brace on

Phase III – Weeks 8 – 12

Goals

Achieve full ankle ROM

Begin light ankle strengthening

Precautions

Weight bearing as tolerated in walker boot with ¼ inch heel lift

- Full ankle passive and active ROM in plantar/dorsiflexion; no forceful stretching of heel cord
- Begin light resistive strengthening in plantar/dorsiflexion with knee flexed (therabands)
- Inversion / eversion isometrics
- Continue hip and knee strengthening, stationary cycling

Phase IV – Months 3 – 6

Goals

Ankle strengthening

Regain normal gait

Precautions

Normal shoes with ¼ inch heel lift; may discontinue heel lift after 1 month

- Increase resistive plantar/dorsiflexion exercises
- Calf and dorsiflexion stretch leaning against wall (avoid excessive calf stretch) – controlled slow eccentric exercises
- Closed chain exercises: controlled squats and lunges; bilateral calf/toe raises, progressing to single leg raises
- Single leg balancing
- Treadmill/track walking; progress to light jogging at 5 months if no symptoms

Phase V – Months 6 – 9

Goals

Continue strengthening

Sport / job specific training

- Progress strengthening, proprioceptive and balance training
- Jogging/running, jumping, and eccentric exercises
- Sport / job specific exercises
- Return to normal sport / strenuous work at 8 – 9 months