



AUCKLAND BONE AND JOINT SURGERY

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ACUTE PATELLOFEMORAL DISLOCATION REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Diagnosis: Acute Patellar Dislocation

Physiotherapy Plan: 2x/wk for 8 weeks

Phase I (week 1-2 after injury)

Goals:

- Decrease pain and swelling
- Limit knee range of motion and weight-bearing to protect healing tissues
- Return muscle function
- Avoid overaggressive therapy that may lead the patient into a patellofemoral pain syndrome

Treatment:

- Bracing: ROM brace, keep in full extension if possible
- Ice therapy PRN
- McConnell taping; light compressive bandage
- Partial weight-bearing with crutches
- VMO electrical stimulation
- Supine straight leg raise (SLR) with minimal to no pain
- Ankle pumps if oedema is present
- Isometric hamstrings

Phase II (week 2-4)

Criteria:

- No significant joint effusion, no quadriceps extension lag, minimal to no pain with activities of daily living

Goals:

- Full knee ROM – pain-free
- Improve quadriceps strength
- Low-level functional activities
- Initiate conditioning
- Avoid patellofemoral symptoms or instability

Treatment:

- Continue ROM bracing (unlocked) or taping
- Weight-bearing as tolerated; discard crutches when extension lag is no longer present
- Continue electrical stimulation and modalities as needed

- Continue supine SLR and add hip adduction and abduction SLRs
- Toe raises with equal weight bearing
- Closed kinetic chain exercises
- Low-level endurance and pool exercises

Phase III (week 4-8)

Criteria:

Full active knee ROM, good to normal quadriceps strength, full weight-bearing with normal gait pattern

Goals:

Improve function
Gradual return to high-level activities

Treatment:

- Bracing: wean from bracing and taping as quadriceps function improves (week 6)
- Four-way hip exercises
- Pool therapy – walking with progression to running
- Sport and skill-specific training
- Proprioceptive training
- Patient education

Criteria for Return to Full Activity (8-12 weeks after injury)

- Equal knee ROM between lower extremities
- No pain or oedema
- 85% strength compared with uninvolved limb
- Satisfactory 1-minute single leg hop test, two-legged hop test
- Patellar stability with clinical tests

Additional Instructions:

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Date: