



Rehabilitation after patellar or quadriceps tendon repair

Patellar tendon or quadriceps tendon repair

These operations repair the tendons that straighten the knee. The repair needs protecting while it heals, so knee bending is increased gradually under your physiotherapist's guidance. Your team will confirm your programme after surgery.

At a glance

Weight bearing	Usually allowed with the knee held straight in the brace
Brace	Hinged knee brace, with the allowed bend increased in stages
Walking aids	Crutches for the early weeks
Normal daily function	Around 6 months

Your recovery, stage by stage

Protection phase **Weeks 0-6**

- Wear the brace as instructed. Walk with crutches, with the brace locked straight.
- Do not try to straighten the knee against resistance or lift the straight leg unless your physiotherapist says so.
- Knee bending is increased gradually in the brace, in the stages set by your team.

Restoring movement **Weeks 6-12**

- The brace and crutches are reduced with your physiotherapist's guidance.
- Knee bend continues to increase, and gentle strengthening begins.

Strengthening and return to function **3-6 months**

- Progressive strengthening, balance and functional work.
- Most people return to normal daily function at around 6 months. Sport and heavy work are discussed at follow-up.

Early exercises

Ankle pumps

Point your feet up and down briskly, 10-20 times every hour while awake. This helps circulation and reduces the risk of blood clots.

Static quads (gentle)

With the leg straight in the brace, gently tighten the thigh muscle, hold 5 seconds and relax. Only start this when your physiotherapist advises.

Buttock squeezes

Squeeze your buttock muscles together, hold 5 seconds, relax. Repeat 10 times.

Assisted knee bending

Only within the range allowed in your brace at each stage.

Looking after yourself

Wound care

Keep the dressing clean and dry. Stitches or clips are usually removed at around 10-14 days. Do not soak the wound in a bath, pool or hot tub until it has fully healed.

Pain relief

Take your pain relief regularly in the early weeks, as prescribed, particularly before exercising. Reduce it gradually as the pain settles.

Swelling

Rest with the leg raised, and use an ice pack wrapped in a towel for 15-20 minutes several times a day. Swelling can last for weeks or months and is common.

Blood clot prevention

Follow the hospital's advice on blood-thinning medicine and stockings. Keep moving, do your ankle exercises, and drink plenty of fluids.

Sources. This guide is based on Mr Umar's practice and is guided by NICE and British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) guidance: NICE NG89: Venous thromboembolism in over 16s - reducing the risk; British Orthopaedic Association (BOA) - guidance and patient information.

When to seek urgent help

Call 999 or go to A&E if you have chest pain, sudden breathlessness or cough up blood.

Contact the hospital where you had your operation straight away (or NHS 111 out of hours) if you have:

- Pain, swelling or tenderness in the calf
- The wound becomes red, hot or increasingly painful, or leaks fluid after the first few days
- A temperature above 38°C, shivering or feeling generally unwell
- A sudden increase in pain or swelling, or you cannot put weight on the leg as advised
- New numbness, tingling, coldness or weakness in the leg or foot



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Questions about your recovery?

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This is general guidance. Always follow the specific instructions from your own surgical and physiotherapy team, as your programme may differ.

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