

Ankle Rehabilitation Post-Reparative Medicine Treatment

Sean Mulvaney, MD; Michael Auriemma, MD

- First Days Post Treatment
 - **Maintain non-weight bearing status to the treated ankle/leg through use of axillary crutches for the prescribed number of days**, which depends on the specific treatment as well as the type and severity of the ankle injury. (Typically, 2 days minimum, up to as long as 2 weeks). Depending on the severity of injury/specific treatment rendered, you may be advised to initially transition from crutches to a walking boot. If you are going to be in the boot for longer than 2-3 days after discontinuing crutches, it is advised that you obtain an EVENUP (available on Amazon) for the other shoe so as not to throw off your pelvic alignment.
 - It is very important during this time not to use or load the foot/ankle/leg. This includes transitioning from a seated to standing position, such as getting up/off the toilet. The concept here is that the reparative treatment was precisely placed into the tear or injury site and loading the foot/ankle/leg during this critical phase may displace the treatment. When muscles or tendons are loaded, they squeeze tightly together: picture wringing out a wet dishcloth (which we want to avoid during this phase).
 - IF you are placed in a walking boot after transitioning off crutches, you may remove it for bathing/hygiene, but afterwards it should be replaced and worn for the prescribed number of days. Your physician will specify whether you need to sleep in the boot or not. During this time, you may gently dorsiflex, plantarflex, invert, and evert your ankle as needed for comfort and to prevent stiffness.
- Once off crutches/out of the walking boot; for the next 2 to 3 weeks
 - “Write the Alphabet with your foot”
 - From a seated or lying position, *write the alphabet* with your foot against air by pushing the ankle down, up, and rolling it side-to-side. Do this 4 to 6 times a day.
 - Initiate walking
 - You may begin slowly and progressively increasing the amount you walk for completing everyday activities. Don’t push it, a little walking is good, but don’t overdo it if it is painful.
- Guidance for Physical Therapy (PT)
 - Start formal PT at two to three weeks post-procedure. The initial goals will be to restore full range of motion followed by learning how to activate and strengthen the intrinsic foot muscles (these are the muscles located within the foot that do not cross your ankle joint and are often under-developed). Initiate strengthening around ankle joint (ankle 4-way, BAPs board, eccentric heel drops). Include core strength and proximal lower extremity stability to improved function throughout the entire lower extremity kinetic chain. Continue to progress ankle strengthening and proprioception to more dynamic activities. Some brief (10 minutes or less) period of heat or ice therapy will not hurt the therapy, but it is not required. Avoid modalities

such as any form of laser or electrical stimulation. Dry needling is fine if needed.

- During this time, avoid aggravating activities. Exercise is vital to good health and finding a way to cross train around your injury is important not only for your physical health, but for your mental health as well. Ask about cross training options for your injury. In general, we recommend against higher impact cardiovascular exercise (running, jumping, prolonged walking) in the beginning, instead focusing on swimming, elliptical, and stationary cycling (in the seated position).