

NON-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Non-Operative Patellar Dislocation

William McLaughlin, MD | Sports Medicine Surgery | Advanced Bone & Joint

Phase 1 | 0-2 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- WBAT in brace at all times (except for showering).
- Progress ROM to 0-90°.
- Maintain quadriceps flexibility.
- Rest — avoid physical activities.

Weight Bearing & Bracing

- WBAT, wear brace at all times except for showering.

Range of Motion

- ROM: 0-90°.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Work on maintaining quad flexibility, ankle pumps.

Activity

- Rest, no physical activities.

Phase 2 | 2-4 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- WBAT in brace during ambulation and therapy; can remove at night if stable.
- Begin formal physical therapy.
- Avoid running, jumping, and competitive activities.
- Progress ROM to 0-120°.
- Initiate proprioception training and quadriceps activation.

Weight Bearing & Bracing

- WBAT, wear brace when ambulating and during therapy.
- May remove brace at night if stable.

Range of Motion

- ROM: 0-120°.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Begin formal physical therapy.
- Proprioception training.
- SLR, quad sets, ankle pumps.

Precautions

- No running, jumping, or competitive activities.

Modalities

- Modalities to decrease swelling and discomfort.

Phase 3 | 4-6 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Continue WBAT with brace during ambulation and therapy.
- Maintain ROM 0-120°.

Weight Bearing & Bracing

- WBAT, wear brace when ambulating and during therapy.

Range of Motion

- ROM: 0-120°.

Phase 4 | 6-8 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Gradually return to activities including jogging and running.
- Advance progressive squat and step-down programs.
- Introduce agility and conditioning drills.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Gradually begin returning to activities, including jogging and running.
- Progressive squat program.
- Initiate step-down program.
- Leg press, lunges.
- Isotonic knee extensions (90°-40°, closed chain preferred).
- Agility exercises (sport cord).
- VersaClimber / NordicTrack.

- Retrograde treadmill ambulation.

Phase 5 | 8-10 Weeks

GOALS FOR THIS PHASE

- Continue strengthening and flexibility.
- Advance sport-specific agility drills.
- Progress plyometric program.
- Return to sport when MD-directed criteria are met.

Therapeutic Exercises

- Continue strengthening & flexibility program.
- Advance sport-specific agility drills.
- Start plyometric program; advance as tolerated.
- Return to sport — MD directed.

This protocol is a general guideline. Progression is patient-specific and at the discretion of William McLaughlin, MD.