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MPFL RECONSTRUCTION

Rehabilitation Protocol

The Medial Patello-Femoral Ligament (MPFL) plays a key role in keeping the patella (kneecap) stable, but good muscle strength and neuromuscular control are equally important. Following MPFL reconstruction, rehabilitation focuses on protecting the healing graft while rebuilding strength and coordination. The goal is to ensure the knee regains optimal stability and function before a return to sporting activity. Generally, there is no brace required unless Mr Gibbons has instructed you otherwise.

Recovery timelines can vary widely between individuals. Progress through rehabilitation may be quicker or slower depending on factors such as pain, swelling, and the specifics of the initial injury. Swelling can persist for several weeks, and the use of a compression sleeve (such as Tubigrip) along with regular icing is recommended during this time—often for up to 6–8 weeks. Ice can be applied using a cold pack or frozen peas for around 15 minutes, 3–4 times daily. Even beyond this period, applying ice after exercise or physiotherapy sessions may still help manage symptoms.

It is common to experience some numbness around the surgical scar, which typically improves over time. Bruising is also expected and may appear quite marked initially. For those who have undergone a hamstring graft, discomfort and bruising at the back of the thigh are common. As the hamstring tissue regenerates over the following 1–2 years, occasional sensations of pulling or tearing may occur due to minor disruption of scar tissue; this is usually short-lived and does not lead to long-term issues.

Physiotherapy is an important part of your recovery and should start within the first two weeks following your surgery. Running is allowed after full range of motion, good strength and proprioception (balance) is attained. The earliest you can begin running straight ahead on a level surface is 8 to 10 weeks but often it takes 3 – 4 months. Your physiotherapist will help guide you.

Patella stability depends on both ligaments and muscular control, and the knee remains at risk of re-injury until good muscle control returns. You may return to “high risk” sports, *i.e.* those which require cutting and twisting (rugby, soccer, basketball) or are unpredictable (skiing) only after you have regained your full range of motion, strength and balance. This usually takes a minimum of 6 months but may be longer and your physiotherapist will guide you.

For any questions or concerns please email: johngibbonssec@gmail.com