

## **POST-OPERATIVE REHABILITATION: ANKLE FRACTURE FIXATION**

**Therapy Plan:** Twice per week for 0-3 months, once per week for 3-6 months

### **ROM Progression**

Splint on at all times for 0-2 weeks for soft tissue healing.

Passive ankle motion for 2-6 weeks after surgery with gentle progression.

Progress ankle motion from 6-12 weeks with the goal of full symmetric range of motion at 12 weeks.

### **Weight Bearing Progression**

Initially NO weight bearing 0-6 weeks after surgery

- For simple fractures weight bearing may start earlier but requires surgeon clearance
- Progress weight bearing over weeks 6-8 with the goal of removing crutches at 8 weeks
- Do NOT progress to one crutch - gait must be pain free and non-compensatory to remove both crutches
- The ankle boot must remain in place for at least 6 weeks

### **Initial Post-Operative Physical Therapy Visit**

- Correctly perform NON-weight bearing ambulation with crutches/walker
- Instruct on knee ROM exercises
- Isometric exercises for core

### **Phase 1 Physical Therapy (2-6 weeks):** protect the joint, fracture healing

- NO open-chain exercises
- Manual therapy 20+ minutes per session, stationary bike 20-60 minutes/day (NO resistance)
- Soft tissue mobilization, ankle mobilization, isometric exercises, core strengthening
- Boot in place at all times while ambulating

### **Phase 2 Physical Therapy (6-12 weeks):** progressive strengthening

- Wean out of boot and off crutches after 6 weeks
- Gradually progress weight bearing as above
- Tactile and verbal cueing to enable non-compensatory gait patterning
- Soft tissue mobilization, ankle mobilization, isometric exercises, core strengthening

### **Phase 3 Physical Therapy (12-24 weeks):** return to pre-injury level and sport

- Focus on functional exercises in all planes, advance only when fully controlled
- Advance closed-chain and core strengthening
- Proprioceptive training
- Full return may take 4-6 months or more