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REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Fifth Metatarsal (Jones) Fracture

Postoperative Rehabilitation Protocol — Standard and Accelerated "In-Season"

Version: November 2026 · Online: nickstrassermd.com/fifth-metatarsal-jones

> This protocol is a general guideline and does not replace individualized medical advice. Timelines vary with the procedure performed, healing, and individual factors. Always follow the specific instructions from your surgeon and physical therapist, which take precedence over this document.

Below is a general guideline for rehab after a fifth metatarsal fracture. This can be adjusted for "in-season" vs "out-of-season" demands with a more aggressive timeline.

Standard Protocol

Phase 1: Immediate Postoperative

Weeks 0–4

GOAL Protect the surgical repair and manage swelling.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Non-weight-bearing (NWB) for the entire phase
- **Immobilization:** Cast or post-op splint to protect the foot

EXERCISES

- **Toe ROM:** Gentle range of motion exercises for toes to prevent stiffness
- **Ankle pumps and circles:** To promote circulation and prevent stiffness, without stressing the fracture site
- **Core and upper body strengthening:** Maintain overall conditioning

PRECAUTIONS

- Keep the foot elevated to control swelling
- Monitor for signs of complications (e.g., infection, excessive swelling)

Phase 2: Early Weight-Bearing

Weeks 4–8

GOAL Begin controlled weight-bearing, continue protecting the surgical site.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Partial weight-bearing (PWB) initiated at 4 weeks, progressing as tolerated
- **Immobilization:** Transition to a walking boot (with crutches as needed)

EXERCISES

- Continue toe ROM and ankle mobility exercises
- Isometric strengthening of lower leg (without significant stress on the foot)
- Begin gentle resistance exercises for the ankle (e.g., banded dorsiflexion, inversion/eversion) by Week 6
- **Proprioception training:** Start light, non-weight-bearing balance exercises to enhance proprioception

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid high-impact activities

- Ensure progressive increase in weight-bearing without pain or swelling

Phase 3: Full Weight-Bearing in Boot

Weeks 8–12

GOAL Transition to full weight-bearing and wean off the boot.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Progress to full weight-bearing as tolerated in the boot
- **Immobilization:** Continue using the boot until Week 8, then transition to normal footwear with a carbon fiber insert

EXERCISES

- Full range of motion (ROM) exercises for the ankle and foot
- Progress to weight-bearing balance and proprioception training (e.g., single-leg stance, balance board)
- **Resisted strengthening exercises:** Start lower leg resistance exercises, focusing on calf raises and toe curls
- **Aquatic therapy:** If available, begin low-impact water-based exercises

PRECAUTIONS

- Ensure no limping during walking in the boot or after transitioning to regular footwear
- Monitor for any signs of pain during full weight-bearing

Phase 4: Return to Sport-Specific Training

Weeks 12–16

GOAL Restore functional strength, mobility, and endurance.

WEIGHT BEARING

- Full weight-bearing in normal footwear with the carbon fiber insert

EXERCISES

- Progress to single-leg strengthening exercises (e.g., single-leg squats, lunges)
- Advanced balance and proprioception drills (e.g., dynamic balance, agility drills)
- **Sport-specific drills:** Gradually reintroduce running, cutting, and jumping mechanics
- Continue calf strengthening and foot intrinsic muscle training

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid high-impact or competitive play until cleared by a physician and confirmation of radiographic healing
- Gradual return to sport-specific activities is crucial to prevent re-injury

Phase 5: Return to Play

Weeks 16 and beyond

GOAL Achieve full functional recovery and safe return to competitive soccer.

EXERCISES

- Full participation in practice with close monitoring
- Continue strength and conditioning for lower extremity, focusing on explosive movements and agility
- **Plyometrics and sport-specific drills:** Progress intensity gradually

- **Return to play:** Full clearance based on clinical exam, functional testing, and imaging if necessary

This protocol should be adapted based on the athlete's recovery, symptoms, and functional progress.

Accelerated "In-Season" Protocol

Occasionally, these injuries will occur in season and can benefit from an accelerated rehab protocol. Below is a general timeline for how you can return to play approximately 8 weeks after a "Jones fracture" repair.

Phase 1: Immediate Postoperative

Weeks 0–2

GOAL Protect the surgical site and manage swelling.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Non-weight-bearing (NWB) for the first 2 weeks
- **Immobilization:** Boot applied immediately post-op to protect the foot

EXERCISES

- **Toe ROM:** Gentle range of motion for toes to prevent stiffness
- **Ankle pumps and circles:** To promote circulation without stressing the fracture site
- **Core and upper body strengthening:** Maintain conditioning without stressing the lower limb
- **Isometric quad and glute exercises:** To prevent muscle atrophy

PRECAUTIONS

- Elevate the foot to control swelling
- Avoid any weight-bearing on the operated foot

Phase 2: Early Weight-Bearing

Weeks 2–4

GOAL Begin progression to full weight-bearing.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Partial weight-bearing (PWB) in the boot beginning at Week 2, progressing to full weight-bearing (FWB) by Week 4
- **Immobilization:** Continue using the walking boot

EXERCISES

- Continue toe ROM and ankle mobility exercises
- **Isometric strengthening of the lower extremity:** Gentle activation of muscles (e.g., quads, glutes)
- **Proprioception exercises:** Begin light seated balance exercises
- Maintain upper body and core strengthening

PRECAUTIONS

- Avoid overloading the fracture site during weight-bearing
- Ensure gradual progression to FWB without pain

Phase 3: Transition to Shoe

Weeks 4–6

GOAL Transition from boot to normal footwear with a carbon fiber insert and increase mobility.

WEIGHT BEARING & IMMOBILIZATION

- **Weight-bearing:** Full weight-bearing in a shoe with a carbon fiber insert starting at Week 4

EXERCISES

- **Ankle and foot ROM:** Continue to restore full mobility
- **Balance and proprioception training:** Single-leg balance, stability exercises

- **Immobilization:** No longer using the boot, transitioning to normal shoes with the insert

PRECAUTIONS

- Ensure pain-free full weight-bearing in shoes with the carbon fiber insert
- Avoid high-impact or twisting movements

- **Strengthening exercises:** Begin more dynamic strengthening such as calf raises, banded ankle movements
- **Low-impact conditioning:** Biking, swimming, or elliptical work to maintain cardiovascular fitness

Phase 4: Sport-Specific Training

Weeks 6–8

GOAL Prepare for return to soccer with progressive functional drills.

WEIGHT BEARING

- Full weight-bearing with a carbon fiber insert in regular shoes

EXERCISES

- **Sport-specific conditioning:** Begin light running, forward/backward drills, and low-intensity soccer-specific movements
- Continue strengthening exercises for the foot, ankle, and lower leg
- **Plyometric exercises:** Begin with low-impact hopping, progressing to more dynamic drills
- **Proprioception and agility training:** Lateral movements, cutting, and directional change exercises

PRECAUTIONS

- Closely monitor for any signs of pain or swelling as activity levels increase
- Gradually reintroduce intensity of soccer drills and functional movements

Phase 5: Return to Play

Weeks 8 and beyond

GOAL Full return to competitive soccer.

WEIGHT BEARING

- Full weight-bearing with a carbon fiber insert in normal footwear

EXERCISES

- **Sport-specific training:** Progress to full-speed running, cutting, and directional changes
- **Strength and endurance conditioning:** Continue strengthening lower extremities and maintaining cardiovascular fitness
- **Plyometric and agility drills:** Ramp up explosive movements and dynamic drills

RETURN TO PLAY

- Full clearance for soccer practice and competitive play by Week 8, pending functional tests and medical approval
- Continue monitoring for any signs of discomfort or re-injury