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Nonoperative Achilles Tear PT Protocol

Time Frame	Activity
0-2 Weeks	Posterior slab/splint; non-weight-bearing with crutches; immediate postop in surgical group, after injury in non-op group
2-4 Weeks	Aircast walking boot with 2-cm heel lift *+ Protected weight-bearing with crutches Active plantar flexion and dorsiflexion to neutral, inversion/eversion below neutral Modalities to control swelling Incision mobilization modalities ++
	Knee/hip exercises with no ankle involvement; e.g., leg lifts from sitting, prone, or sidelying position Non-weight-bearing fitness/cardiovascular exercises; e.g., bicycling with one leg, deep-water running Hydrotherapy (within motion and weight-bearing limitations)
4-6 Weeks	Weight-bearing as tolerated *+ Continue 2-4 week protocol
6-8 Weeks	Remove heel lift Weight-bearing as tolerated*+ Graduated resistance exercises (open and closed kinetic chain as well as functional activities) Proprioceptive and gait retraining Modalities including ice, heat, and ultrasound, as indicated Incision mobilization++
	Fitness/cardiovascular exercises to include weight-bearing as tolerated; e.g., bicycling, elliptical machine, walking and/or running on treadmill, StairMaster Hydrotherapy
8-12 Weeks	Wean off boot Return to crutches and/or cane as necessary and gradually wean off Continue to progress range of motion, strength, proprioception
>12 Weeks	Continue to progress range of motion, strength, proprioception Retrain strength, power, endurance Increase dynamic weight-bearing exercise, include plyometric training Sport-specific retraining

*Patients were required to wear the boot while sleeping

+Patients could remove the boot for bathing and dressing, but were required to adhere to the weight-bearing restrictions according to the rehabilitation protocol.

++ If, in the opinion of the physical therapist, scar mobilization was indicated (i.e., the scar was tight or not moving well), the physical therapist would attempt to mobilize using friction, ultrasound, or stretching (if appropriate). In many cases, heat was applied before beginning mobilization techniques.