

Foot and Ankle Update

Casper Orthopedic Associates



"Emerging Protocols in Foot and Ankle Surgery"

Matthew E. Mitchell, M.D.

November 2007

Achilles Tendon Protocols

Achilles tendon ruptures typically occur in middle-aged men. Conventional protocols dictated 3-6 weeks of immobilization. Emerging protocols allow for early weight-bearing and can potentially allow patients to return to competitive or recreational sports at least one month earlier than conventional ones. These protocols are ideal for compliant

individuals and require the supervision of physical therapists. Younger patients usually do not suffer rupture of the Achilles' tendon. Rather, paratendinitis is the more likely diagnosis. These patients can benefit from an eccentric strengthening program that has been shown to be especially beneficial for young patients with Achilles tendinitis. These protocols require the supervision of physical therapists experienced in this treatment.

Ankle Instability

Ankle sprains are a very common injury for both young and older athletes. Most patients do not need to have surgery in order to repair torn ligaments. Rather, a program that emphasizes strengthening and proprioception can achieve success in 80-90% of patients. For those patients experiencing continued ankle sprains despite a vigorous strengthening program including bracing, surgical repair of damaged ligaments can restore ankle function. Emerging techniques allow early weight-bearing after surgery and a

faster return to sport. Conventional protocols required three weeks of immobilization followed by physical therapy. Newer protocols are emphasizing weight-bearing immediately after surgery with return to sport at an accelerated rate. Studies have shown that these accelerated weight-bearing programs allow faster return to normal activity without risking failure of the repair. In some patients, the repair needs to be augmented with a graft and these patients cannot participate in the accelerated rehabilitation protocols.

Conclusion

Rehabilitation protocols for foot and ankle surgery continue to evolve. Newer protocols emphasize early weight-bearing with accelerated return to normal activity. Studies have shown that these accelerated protocols can be utilized without compromising overall results.



Dr. Mitchell is in practice in Casper Wyoming
email: mattmitchell@mattmitchellmd.com
website: www.mattmitchellmd.com