

ACL REHAB SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST

YOUR GUIDE TO A STRONGER, SAFER ACL
INJURY RECOVERY

PREPARED BY:

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GCKG
GOLD COAST KNEE GROUP





Welcome to the ACL Rehab Self-Evaluation Checklist! Recovering from an ACL injury can feel daunting, but with the right roadmap, you can confidently navigate your journey back to sport.

At Gold Coast Knee Group, we've developed this evidence-based, 7-phase checklist to help you assess your rehabilitation progress and ensure you're on track for a safe, effective recovery.

Whether you're pre-surgery, early in rehab, or nearing your return to sport, this tool empowers you to evaluate your strengths, identify areas for improvement, and move forward with clarity.

My team and I are here to support you in achieving a stronger, more resilient comeback. Use this checklist in combination with the video [\[HYPERLINK\]](#) demonstrations to take control of your recovery and get back to doing what you love!

Yours in knee health,

Dr Adam Walker (PhD)



THE SPORTS KNEE REHAB SYSTEM

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|----------|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Prepare Phase | Overcome the trauma of injury and prepare for surgery Aim: Pass Ready For Surgery Goals |
| 2 | Recovery Phase | Settle the knee, regain range of motion and maintain muscle mass. Body weight exercises. Aim: Pass Return To Gym Goals |
| 3 | Reload Phase | Increase loading, develop technical proficiency in key movements, introduce landing and prepare to run. Aim: Pass Return To Run Goals |
| 4 | Rebuild Phase | Return to running, Develop jumping and hopping ability and develop strength. Improve conditioning. Aim: Pass Return To Field/Court Goals |
| 5 | Retrain Phase | Introduce and develop agility performance and technique. Progress to heavy strength training and advanced plyometrics. Aim: Pass Return To Training Goals |
| 6 | Reintegrate Phase | Integrate into team training and commence return to contact. Continue strength and plyometric training including reactive drills. Aim: Pass Return to Sport Goals |
| 7 | Return Phase | Gradual return to full unrestricted sport and establish injury prevention and performance program. Aim: Pass Prevent Reinjury Goals |



The ACL Rehab Self-Evaluation Checklist

Instructions:

For each phase, answer the questions below.

If you can confidently check off all items, you are performing high-quality rehab. If not, focus on addressing the areas where you need improvement.

Phase I: PREPARE

INJURY - SURGERY

Purpose:

Overcome the trauma from the injury and prepare for surgery.

- Are you completing exercises and stretches to regain full range of motion?
- Have you progressed from low-level strength exercises to gym-based exercises?
- Are you maintaining upper body and your fitness?
- If required, have you initiated running and low-level jump and land training?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet the ready for surgery goals? These include minimal swelling or pain and full knee range of motion.



Phase II: RECOVERY

WEEKS
0-6

Purpose:

Settle the knee, regain range of motion and maintain muscle mass. Body weight exercises..

- Are you consistently performing muscle activation, range of motion and body weight exercises?
- Are you retraining balance and practising landing positions?
- Are you working on walking retraining?
- Are you maintaining upper body conditioning and using a stationary bike?
- Are you getting treatment to help with swelling, pain and muscle tightness?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet our return to gym goals? These include walking normally, minimal pain and swelling, good quadricep activation, a straight knee and bending your knee to at least 120°.



Phase III: RELOAD

WEEKS
6-14

Purpose:

Increase loading through weighted exercises, develop technical proficiency in key movements, and prepare to run.

- Are you building tolerance to weighted exercises in all the key movement patterns with a focus on technique and muscle growth?
- Have you started low-impact landing drills to develop the ability to absorb force?
- Are you preparing to run with unloaded running (e.g., pool, airtrack, or incline treadmill walking)?
- Are you maintaining your fitness through cycling or swimming?
- Are you performing stationary upper body sport-specific skills?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet our return to run goals? These include quadricep and hamstring strength difference of less than 30% and above benchmark standards. As well as good calf, hamstring bridge and single leg squat capacity and movement control.



Phase IV: REBUILD

MONTHS
3-4

Purpose:

Return to running, develop jumping and hopping ability and strength. Improve conditioning.

- Are you progressing in the gym with a focus on single leg and lateral strength exercises, transitioning to a strength focus?
- Have you started jumps and hops, focusing on push-off power and technique in multiple directions?
- Have you started a return to run program progressing distance and speed in a straight line, then curved?
- Are you incorporating aerobic and anaerobic conditioning with bike or rower intervals?
- Are you practising stationary lower limb sport-specific skills?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet our return to field/court goals? These include pain-free jogging >2km, land with control in single leg hop tests, and show strength improvements within 20% of the other side and above benchmark standards.



Phase V: RETRAIN

MONTHS
5-8

Purpose:

Introduce and develop agility performance and technique. Progress to heavy strength training and advanced plyometrics.

- Are you lifting heavy loads with unilateral focus and including eccentric hamstring exercises in strength training?
- Are you performing multiple hops in a row and explosive drills in multiple directions?
- Have you started agility retraining focusing on technique, progressing from planned to reactive to competitive drills?
- Are you engaging in running-based fitness training, including specific interval training?
- Are you progressing from straight-line to offline skills and eventually to team training in non-competitive team drills?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet our return to training goals? These include strength and hopping (e.g. single leg hop, drop jump) performance tests with a difference of less than 10% between limbs, and have good landing and change of direction technique in reactive situations.



Phase VI: REINTERGRATE

MONTHS
8-11

Purpose:

Integrate into team training and commence return to contact. Continue strength and plyometric training, including reactive drills.

- Are you addressing specific impairments and focusing on sport-specific strength performance?
- Are you completing reactive hops and perturbation drills in your jump and land training?
- Are you performing sport-specific agility and return-to-contact programs?
- Are you engaging in conditioning with team sessions or extra fitness sessions independently?
- Have you rejoined controlled non-contact team drills and then progressed to full unrestricted training?

PROGRESSION CRITERIA

- Do you meet our return to sport goals? This is a comprehensive assessment involving strength, hop, movement, and psychometric tests to ensure your readiness to return to full unrestricted sport.



Phase VII: RETURN

**11 MONTHS
& BEYOND**

Purpose:

Gradually return to full unrestricted sport. Initiate injury prevention and performance program.

- Are you maintaining strength training for long-term performance and injury prevention?
- Are you performing jump and land drills for long-term performance and injury prevention?
- Are you participating in full training with your team to continue to maintain your agility performance?
- Are you completing conditioning as required, ideally with the team?
- Have you progressed from restricted to full game participation?

STAY ON TRACK FOR YOUR COMEBACK

You've taken a powerful step toward a successful ACL recovery by using the ACL Rehab Self-Evaluation Checklist!

By assessing your progress through each of the 7 phases, you now have a clearer picture of where you stand and what's needed to keep moving forward.

If you have all boxes checked for your current phase, you're performing high-quality rehab.

Celebrate the milestones you've achieved and focus on strengthening any weak areas to ensure a safe return to sport.

If you're unsure about your progress or want expert guidance, consider booking a consultation with Gold Coast Knee Group at gckneegroup.com.au

We're here to provide personalised support and detailed progression criteria to help you succeed. Keep pushing forward—your stronger, safer comeback is within reach!

Reach out and let me know you have completed your rehab self-evaluation, and I'll send through our exact progression criteria we use to proceed from one phase of the next.

Wishing you the best in your rehab journey. It is not easy, but you'll get there if you work hard, stay consistent, and follow a proven system.



ABOUT

DR ADAM WALKER

HEAD OF REHABILITATION, PHYSIOTHERAPIST AND RESEARCHER

Adam founded Gold Coast Knee Group and is dedicated to excellence. He is focusing his professional life on improving outcomes and optimising rehabilitation for people suffering from knee pain and injury. This is built from his PhD, titled “Optimising ACL rehabilitation”.

He has seen over 300 ACL patients and completed 1000s of consults with people with knee pain. Combined with countless hours of professional development and the opportunity to work with and be mentored by some of the best in the business, he strives to do whatever he can to get you to your goals.



Dr Adam Walker, PhD

He now works clinically, teaches within the Bond University Physiotherapy Program, and is heavily involved in knee research.