

Achilles Tendon Rupture VACOped Protocol

Week 0 for conservative = day 1 of boot. Week 0 for surgical repair = date of surgery



East Sussex Healthcare
NHS Trust



Revised July 2026 by Physiotherapists J. Brook, E. Bergin
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Phase 1: Tendon Healing

Goals

- **Protect tendon**
- **Minimise pain and swelling**

0-2 weeks

Setting: STATIC Locked No.3

- Non-weight bearing in boot using two elbow crutches
- VACOped boot on at all times, including at night
- No physio or range of movement
- Ward physio/Plaster room to refer to MSK physio after clinic review at 2 weeks

3-4 weeks

Setting: STATIC Locked No.3

- Limited weight bearing up to 50%, using two elbow crutches
- VACOped boot on 24/7, except for hygiene and exercises
- Monitor skin integrity and smooth out sole and liner daily
- **Exercises:** Active dorsi-flexion **to tension, with knee flexed** and within pain limits
- **No active plantarflexion**
- **No passive movements**
- Introduction to bed exercises to maintain bilateral glute, hamstring, quadriceps and adductor strength

Phase 2: Tendon Healing

Goals

- **Protect healing tendon**
- **Progress to full-weight bearing**
- **Restore dynamic movement**

5-7 weeks

Setting: DYNAMIC unlocked
Reduce each week by 0.5
Achieving No. 1.5 by week 7

- Built up to full-weight-bearing in VACOped boot using two elbow crutches
- VACOped boot on at all times when mobilising
- **Exercises:** Continue with active dorsi-flexion **only until tension felt and knee flexed. No passive dorsi-flexion.**
- **Passive** plantar flexion
- Hip and knee strengthening with boot on – e.g. exercise bike with light resistance
- Gentle frictions/massage once wound healed

Phase 3: Tendon Healing

Goals

- **Regaining full movement**
- **Introduction to ankle strengthening**

8-12 weeks

Setting: DYNAMIC unlocked
Continue lowering by 0.5 until No.0
Flat sole once at No.1

- Full-weight bearing in VACOped boot and boot off at night
- **Exercises:** Ankle passive & active range of movement, but avoiding excessive stretching
- Isometric plantar/dorsi-flexion/inversion/eversion **with knee flexed**
- **Consider referral to LL class or PTI 1:1 if appropriate, to start at >12 weeks of protocol**

Phase 4: Restore Function

Goals

- **Restore ankle strength**
- **Gait restoration**

12-16 weeks

Setting: Wean out of boot

- Consider small heel raise/heel cup at first
- **Exercises:** Resisted plantarflexion/dorsiflexion/inversion/eversion
- Gastrocnemius/Soleus stretches

Phase 5: Restore Function

Goals

- **Return to function and sport**

16 weeks+

- Eccentric calf and closed chain strengthening
- Proprioceptive loading

6+ months

- Sports/Occupation specific
- Return to sport >7-8 months
- Consider strength and proprioceptive symmetry