

# Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction



These guidelines were developed in collaboration with the New Zealand Orthopaedic Association (NZOA). The recommended return-to-work timeframes reflect the expert clinical opinion of the New Zealand Knee Society.

## Overview

This document provides guidelines for recovery and return to work for patients who have undergone ACL reconstruction.

This includes procedures performed under the following ACC elective surgery codes:

Code	Procedure Description
<b>KNE81</b>	Primary knee ACL reconstruction (anterior cruciate ligament)
<b>KNE83</b>	Revision knee ACL reconstruction (anterior cruciate ligament)
<b>KNE91</b>	Primary knee ACL reconstruction (anterior cruciate ligament). Complex includes a KNE81 with meniscal repair &/or outerbridge drilling
<b>KNE93</b>	Revision knee ACL reconstruction (anterior cruciate ligament). Complex includes a KNE83 with meniscal repair &/or outerbridge III-IV drilling or microfracture

For advice on determining the correct medical certification for your patient's injury, please see the Return-to-work guidelines appendix: ACC certification advice.

## Expected recovery timeline

The expected recovery timeline varies depending on the individual patient, the specifics of the surgery and the work type. The following are general guidelines.

The patient's ability and tolerance to perform work tasks should be considered as well as appropriate modifications and restrictions. This will inform the patient, employer and ACC of the suitability for returning to work, either at full, light or alternative duties.

There is strong evidence that a safe and timely return to work results in better patient outcomes. Early return to work with modified duties/hours should be encouraged when appropriate. ACC can provide support to help your patient return to work safely if needed.

## Return-to-work recommendations

Work type classification (as per ACC45 claim form):

Work type	Description	Example
<b>Sedentary</b>	Brief standing and walking	Office, desk worker
<b>Light</b>	Mainly standing and walking	Retail, hospitality worker
<b>Medium</b>	Often lifting 5kg plus	Courier, warehouse worker
<b>Heavy</b>	Often lifting 9kg plus	Builder, mechanic, farm worker
<b>Very Heavy</b>	Often lifting 22kg plus	Firefighter, forestry worker

## Expected full return-to-work timeframes

The timeframes below are for **normative full return to work (FRTW)**. Returning to the workplace should commence as soon as it is medically safe to do so, even in a modified capacity or with alternative duties.

**KNE81/83: ACL reconstruction only (incl. revision)**

Work type	Timeframe for FRTW	Considerations
<b>Sedentary</b>	2-4 weeks	Modified hours
<b>Light</b>	4-8 weeks	Modified duties and/or hours
<b>Medium</b>	8-10 weeks	
<b>Heavy</b>	10-16 weeks	
<b>Very Heavy</b>	16-30 weeks	

**KNE91/93: ACL reconstruction with meniscal repair and/ or with meniscal repair &/or outerbridge III-IV drilling or microfracture**

Timeframes may be extended due to non-weightbearing/ bracing protocols due to the meniscal repair and/or chondroplasty.

Work type	Timeframe for FRTW	Considerations
<b>Sedentary</b>	2-4 weeks	Modified hours/ gradual return to work. Transport assistance
<b>Light</b>	8-10 weeks	
<b>Medium</b>	10-12 weeks	Modified duties and hours as required
<b>Heavy</b>	10-16 weeks	
<b>Very Heavy</b>	16-30 weeks	

**Restrictions and/or modifications**

Activity	Expected timeframe	Considerations
<b>Driving</b>	1-2 weeks	Consider for right leg operations. As pain and movement allows
<b>Managing uneven terrain</b>	8-16 weeks	For medium and heavy/ very heavy work types
<b>Surgeries that require bracing</b>	4 weeks	Allows restoration of range of motion and strength program

**Flags for delayed recovery**

Signs of delayed recovery can include:

- Significant swelling
- Persistent pain
- Knee instability
- Poor quadriceps strength

If you think the patient is going to be outside the expected recovery timeframes, please let ACC know.

**ACC can help your patient return to work by providing:**

- vocational rehabilitation programmes
- specialised equipment and technology to support recovery at work
- assistance with transport to and from work
- occupational workstation assessments
- functional assessments
- specialised vocational medical services

**For more information**

Visit our website or call us on **0800 222 070**.

We're here to help.

