



## When do you get to get off crutches??

### Progression Criteria:

Symmetrical Passive Knee Extension

Normalized quad contraction with quad setting.

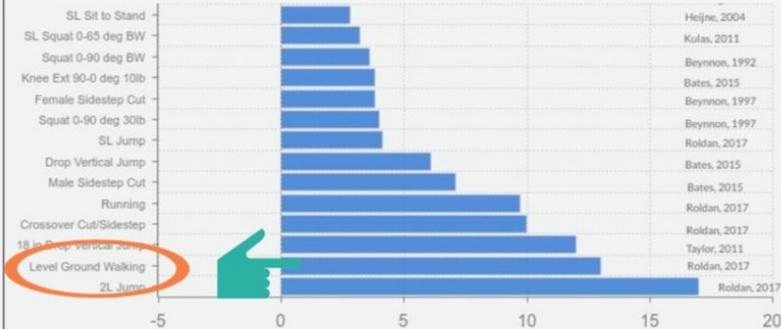
Able to perform a straight leg raise without an extensor lag

Able to demonstrate normal heel-to-toe mechanics in strike phase of gait without knee flexion "break"

Minimal to no swelling with mobility work and early phase strength training.

**Fun fact:** There is *more* strain on the ACL with level ground walking than there is with a single leg jump. This is why we want an individual to **OWN** their walking skill. Not just tolerate it.

## ACL Tensile Strain with Exercise



## How to succeed in the first phase (which sets you up for success in the end phase!)

**The Quiet Knee:** In the first several weeks, our goals should be to allow the post-surgical trauma to resolve. We cannot speed healing up but we can slow it down. Slowing it down may look like trying to walk on the knee before our strength has returned, forcing movement too aggressively causing increased pain and swelling, or not establishing consistency with the home program.

**Signs you may be doing TOO much:** If the knee is becoming more painful after a workout or daily activity, you may be doing too much. If you are getting an increase in swelling into the next day, you may be doing too much. Adjust your frequency and intensity of exercises to meet your body where it's at. Adjust daily activity to let things calm down.

**What is normal?** When working on the straightening, you should feel the discomfort in the back of the knee. When you are working on your bending, you should feel it primarily in the front. There may be some "noise" in the system, but this should be your general experience. Some soreness after a workout or activity is normal, but increased pain rather than just a little sore, may suggest pushing too hard. Frequency is the key when it comes to mobility. It is far better to do something every hour than to do the whole program once in the morning and once at night, for example.

**Keys to Success:** 1) Your therapist will tell you when you're ready to get off crutches, this supersedes even your surgeon telling you to wean off them when you're "ready". 2) Be consistent with your program. Minimize doing too much then flaring up and being unable to do anything for several days. Less peaks and valleys, more ripples. 3) Work hard but no need to be aggressive. 4) Manage post-operative trauma-compression, elevation, activity modification, etc are all your friends.