DR. KAISEN YAO, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SPORTS MEDICINE SURGEON

Post-Operative Physical Therapy Protocol

Ankle Arthroscopy

Northwell Health • Department of Orthopedic Surgery & Sports Medicine • Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

Patient Name	Date of Surgery	Prescribing Surgeon
		Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

General Guidelines & Precautions

- Weight bearing is typically progressed quickly, per surgeon direction, using a boot or brace as needed for comfort and protection.
- Prioritize swelling control with ice, compression, and elevation.
- Begin early, gentle range of motion to prevent stiffness once cleared.
- Contact the surgeon for fever, excessive drainage, uncontrolled pain, or rapidly increasing swelling.

PHASE I
Immediate Post-Op

TIMEFRAME
WEEKS 0–2

Goals:
Control pain and swelling, and begin protected range of motion.

Interventions:
Cryotherapy, compression, elevation, gentle active ankle range of motion (pumps, circles) as tolerated, and toe/foot intrinsic activation.

Gait:
Weight bearing as tolerated in a boot or brace as directed.

Criteria to Progress:
Incision healing well, pain controlled, and improving ankle range of motion.

PHASE II
Progressive Motion & Strengthening

TIMEFRAME
WEEKS 2–4

Goals:
Restore full range of motion and begin progressive strengthening and proprioception.

Interventions:
Active and gentle passive range of motion, calf and ankle strengthening with resistance bands, balance and proprioception drills, and gait normalization out of the boot as cleared.

Criteria to Progress:
Full range of motion, minimal swelling, and normalized gait.

PHASE III
Advanced Strengthening & Function

TIMEFRAME
WEEKS 4–6

Goals:
Restore full strength and dynamic stability for daily and sport-related activity.

Interventions:
Progressive resistance strengthening, single-leg balance progression, agility drills, and sport-specific footwork as tolerated.

Criteria to Progress:
No pain with functional loading and good single-leg balance.

PHASE IV
Return to Activity

TIMEFRAME
WEEKS 6–8+

Goals:
Return to unrestricted daily activity, work, or sport.

Interventions:
Sport- or task-specific conditioning and progressive loading.

Return to Sport/Work:
Return to running, cutting, or impact sports should follow surgeon and therapist clearance.

Discharge Criteria:
Full pain-free range of motion, symmetrical strength, and safe mechanics with dynamic tasks.

This protocol is a general guideline. Progression should be individualized by the treating physical therapist in coordination with Dr. Yao's office based on the specific arthroscopic procedure performed.