Athlete's Guide: Return to Lifting After Meniscus Surgery

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About this guide

Stay in the gym, protect the knee. This guide gives athletes and bodybuilders a muscle-group-by-muscle-group timeline for returning to lifting after meniscus surgery. It covers two surgeries side by side:

- **Meniscectomy:** the torn piece is trimmed away
- **Meniscus repair:** the tear is stitched so it can heal

Your own timeline may differ based on the tear and how your knee responds. Your surgical report and Dr. Jazayeri's instructions always come first.

Your surgery: what each one protects

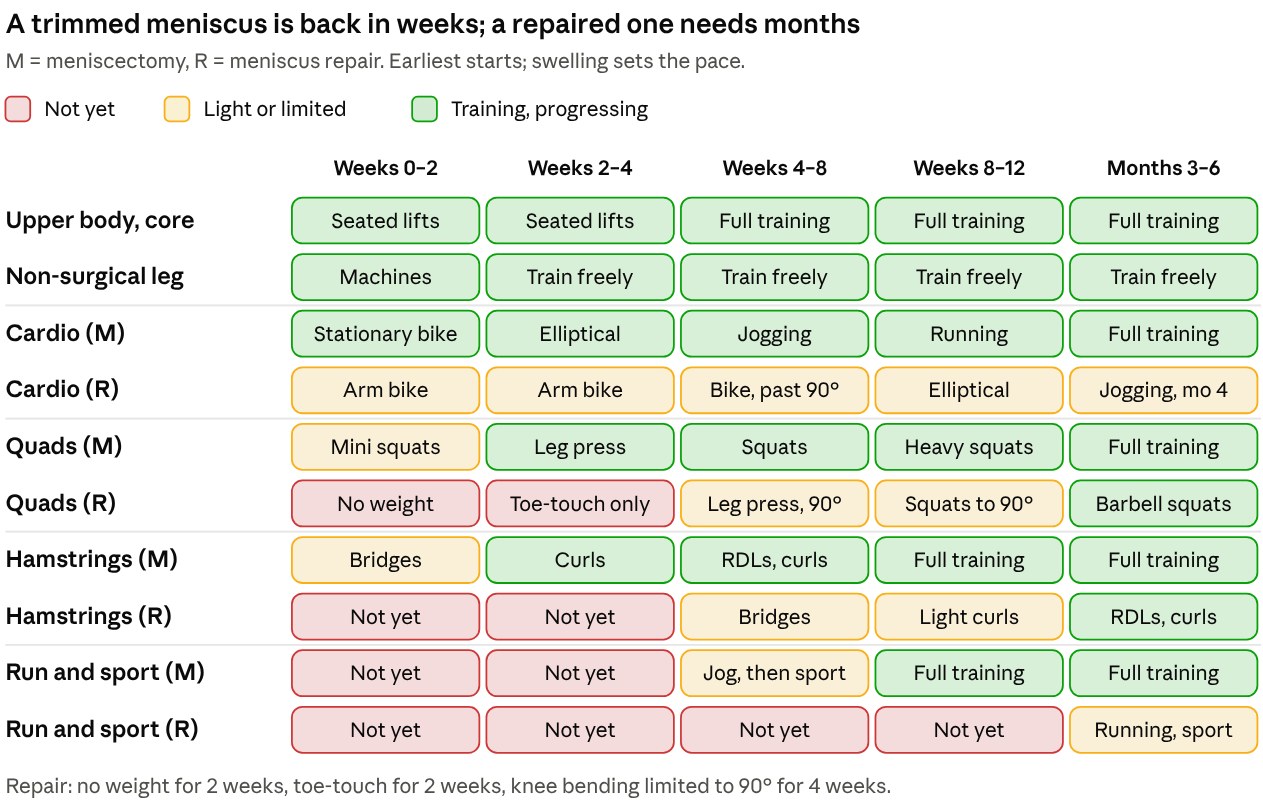
A meniscectomy has nothing to heal, so you can progress as quickly as swelling allows. A repair needs weeks of protection before the stitched cartilage can take load.

	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Weight-bearing	As tolerated from day 1	**None for 2 weeks**, then **toe-touch for 2 weeks**, then gradually increased
Knee bending	As tolerated	**Limited to 90° for the first 4 weeks**

	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Deep loaded squats	Week 6	Month 4–6
Running	Week 4–6	Month 4
Return to sport	Week 6–8	Month 5–6

At a glance: what you can train, and when

Your upper body, core, and other leg can train from week 1 after either surgery. The surgical knee is where the two timelines split.



What you can train, by body part and phase · meniscectomy vs. meniscus repair

Exercise timeline by body part

Times are from the day of surgery. Each one is the **earliest** start, if your knee is quiet (little swelling, no pain) and you have met the milestones below.

Cardio and conditioning

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Arm bike (seated)	Day 2–3	Week 1
Stationary bike	Week 1	Week 4–5 (once past 90°)
Pool walking (incisions healed)	Week 2	Week 4–6
Elliptical	Week 2	Week 6–8
Stair climber	Week 2–3	Week 8
Rowing machine (deep knee bend)	Week 3	Week 10–12
Jogging	Week 4–6	Month 4

Upper body

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Seated machines and dumbbells	Week 1	Week 1
Standing upper-body lifts	Week 1–2	Week 4–6 (off crutches)
Pull-ups (step down, never drop)	Week 2	Week 6

Core

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Crunches, dead bugs, side planks from the knees	Week 1	Week 1
Front plank	Week 1–2	Week 4
Hanging leg raises, standing cable core	Week 2	Week 6

Non-surgical leg

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Single-leg extension, curl, and leg press	Week 1	Week 1

Hips and glutes

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Glute bridges, side-lying hip raises	Week 1	Week 1–2
Hip abductor/adductor machine	Week 1	Week 2
Hip thrust	Week 2	Week 6

Quads and hamstrings (surgical leg)

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Quad sets, straight-leg raises	Day 1	Day 1
Mini squats, leg extension (light)	Week 1–2	Week 4–6 (0–90°)
Leg press	Week 2	Week 6 (0–90°)
Bodyweight squats	Week 2–3	Week 8 (to 90°)
Hamstring curls	Week 2	Week 8–12 (curls stress the repair)
Split squats, step-ups, lunges	Week 3–4	Week 12

Squats and deadlifts

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Goblet squat, Romanian deadlift	Week 3	Month 3
Barbell squat to parallel, trap-bar deadlift	Week 4–6	Month 4
Heavy or below-parallel squats	Week 6	Month 4–6

Calves

Exercise	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Calf raises	Week 1–2	Week 4–6

Running, jumping, and sport

Activity	Meniscectomy	Meniscus repair
Straight-line running	Week 4–6	Month 4
Jumping, agility drills	Week 6	Month 4–5
Cutting, pivoting, return to sport	Week 6–8	Month 5–6

Training rules

- **Swelling is your speedometer.** If the knee is more swollen the next morning, drop back a step.
- **Start every new leg exercise light**, at about 30% of your old working weight, and add no more than about 10% per week.
- **After repair, respect the weight-bearing and 90° limits**, including on the bike, leg press, and squat machines.
- **No loaded deep squats or twisting on a bent knee** until cleared. These put the most stress on the meniscus.
- **Physical therapy comes first.** Gym work adds to your therapy; it never replaces it.

Milestones, not just dates

- **Before leaving crutches:** walking without a limp, full straightening, quad control
- **Before running:** little or no swelling, pain-free full squat to 90°, quad strength at least 70% of your other side
- **Before sport:** strength at least 90% of your other side, pain-free hopping and cutting, and surgeon clearance

Call the office if you notice

- Calf pain, swelling, or tenderness in the lower leg
- Fever, redness, or drainage from an incision
- Locking, catching, or new pain along the joint line
- Swelling that keeps building after activity

Your Surgical Athlete plan

- **Before surgery:** Metabolic Report Card labs check hormonal, metabolic and nutritional markers. Targeted amino acid supplements start one week before surgery. We also discuss peptide therapeutics and a muscle-centric diet to limit thigh muscle loss.
- **In the operating room:** orthobiologics such as PRP or bone marrow aspirate concentrate (BMAC) may be used to support meniscus healing, when appropriate.
- **After surgery:** you keep training everything the knee allows, using the timeline above.

Let's talk openly about your training

I work with many athletes and bodybuilders, and I know anabolic steroids, peptides, and supplements are often part of the picture. That conversation is welcome in my office, without judgment. Being honest lets us plan timing, decide what to continue, taper or stop, and support healing. Please don't stop or change anything on your own before we talk.

Your comeback starts before surgery

Ready to plan your recovery? Call **1-844-JAZ-0911** or email rjassistant@docshealth.com to schedule a consultation with Dr. Jazayeri at DOCS Health in Beverly Hills or Westlake Village.

This guide is for education only and isn't a substitute for personal medical advice. Timelines vary with each tear, repair, and patient. Always follow your surgeon's and physical therapist's specific instructions.