

# ACL Rehab Mistakes Guide

10 common mistakes that delay recovery — and what to do instead

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## Introduction

ACL rehab rarely fails because people don't work hard enough. It fails because the wrong priorities are followed at the wrong time. This guide outlines the most common ACL rehab mistakes seen clinically — and how to avoid them.

## MISTAKE #1: Chasing Timelines Instead of Readiness

Using time alone to judge progress ignores strength, control, and confidence.

**Do instead:** Progress based on criteria, not dates.

## MISTAKE #2: Assuming Pain Means Damage

Pain is often a normal part of healing and adaptation.

**Do instead:** Monitor patterns and load response.

## MISTAKE #3: Adding Load Before Earning Control

Load can hide poor movement quality.

**Do instead:** Master slow, controlled reps first.

## MISTAKE #4: Treating Rehab Like Training

Rehab and training serve different purposes.

**Do instead:** Respect the goal of each phase.

## MISTAKE #5: Overreacting to Bad Days

Fluctuations are part of normal recovery.

**Do instead:** Look at weekly trends.

## MISTAKE #6: Rushing Return to Running

Running introduces repetitive impact demands.

**Do instead:** Meet strength and control prerequisites.

## MISTAKE #7: Ignoring Psychological Readiness

Fear and hesitation affect movement quality.

**Do instead:** Build confidence through graded exposure.

## MISTAKE #8: Comparing Your Rehab to Others

Every ACL recovery is individual.

**Do instead:** Focus on your own readiness markers.

## MISTAKE #9: Stopping Rehab at Return to Play

Clearance is not the finish line.

**Do instead:** Progress toward return to performance.

## MISTAKE #10: Abandoning Prevention After Return

Risk increases when strength and load management stop.

**Do instead:** Maintain long-term strength and monitoring.

## Final Thought

Avoiding these mistakes doesn't guarantee a perfect recovery, but it dramatically improves your chances of a strong, sustainable return to sport.

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