

6 QUESTION

WHEN WOULD YOU USE PATELLAR TENDON AUTOGRAFT AS YOUR MAIN GRAFT SELECTION?

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I use patellar tendon autograft as my main graft selection in young, high-demand, active patients. Bone-patellar tendon-bone (BTB) autograft anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction has the longest proven record of successful outcomes and is the technique by which all others are compared (Table 6-1). We believe that this graft may also have some advantages for a subset of high-demand patients who desire or require a quick return to cutting and pivoting sports. Specifically, BTB autograft allows for bone-to-bone fixation with metal interference screws, which has been shown to be a strong and reliable fixation method with an initial fixation strength of 558 Newtons (N).⁵ Additionally, there is evidence to support using BTB autograft in order to minimize hamstring avoidance, especially in young female soccer players.⁶ For these several reasons, BTB autograft is our graft of choice for young, high-demand, active patients without pre-existing anterior knee pain (Figure 6-1).

I would not use patellar tendon autograft in patients with preexisting anterior knee pain or in those patients who do a large amount of kneeling for work or religion because they may be more likely to have anterior knee pain from the graft harvest site⁷ (Figure 6-1). This is controversial because it has been shown that there is no difference in the incidence of anterior knee pain between patients with bone-patellar tendon-bone autografts and allografts.⁸ There is, however, probably a trend toward more anterior knee pain with patellar tendon autograft ACL reconstructions when compared to hamstring autograft ACL reconstructions.⁹

Deciding which graft to recommend to a patient for ACL reconstruction involves many factors. Ideally, an ACL graft should have biomechanical and structural properties that are similar to those of the patient's own ACL. The initial graft tensile strength of bone-patellar tendon-bone autograft is 2977 N with a stiffness of 620 N/mm. This is over 1.5 times the strength and 4 times the stiffness of the native ACL.^{10,11} Additionally, graft

