

Physiotherapy after your knee arthroscopy

This leaflet gives you advice about recovering from your knee arthroscopy. It explains exercises you should do each day, things to look out for and some general advice.

If you have any further questions, please speak to the physiotherapist caring for you.

For you to be discharged safely from the hospital following your knee arthroscopy you will be seen by a physiotherapist either before or after your surgery. The physiotherapist will show you exercises to strengthen your knee and movements to stop it from becoming stiff.

Your physiotherapist will provide you with crutches and teach you how to walk safely with them. You will be able to put as much weight through your operated leg as is comfortable unless your surgeon or physiotherapist tell you otherwise. If you have stairs at home, your physiotherapist will also instruct you on how to go up and down the stairs using crutches.

General advice

- **Pain:** Following your operation you may find that your knee is painful. As a local anaesthetic has been put into your knee, you may only start to feel pain the evening you leave hospital or the following morning. To help reduce any discomfort you will be prescribed painkillers and it is important that you take these regularly, as prescribed by the doctor looking after you.
- **Swelling:** To reduce swelling in your operated leg you should rest with your leg elevated for an hour at a time, at regular intervals throughout the day. Use pillows or cushions to ensure your foot is above the level of your knee and your knee is above the level of your hip. When resting your leg, make sure that the knee is in a straight position. Do not be tempted to put pillows under your knee to make it more comfortable.
- **Ice:** To help with any pain or swelling you can use ice. Cover the knee with a towel and apply an ice pack (crushed ice in a plastic bag or a bag of frozen peas) for 15-20 minutes three or four times a day. Take care that you do not get your knee wet when applying the ice pack. Do not apply ice if you have sensory or circulation problems.
- **Activity:** You may find that your operated leg is stiffer and feels weaker than before the operation. The exercise programme on this information leaflet is designed to help with this. It is important that you start these exercises immediately following your operation to prevent any other problems occurring.

Knee arthroscopy exercise programme

Aim to do three sets of the exercises each day

Phase 1 – Starting on the day of surgery

1. Static quads

Sit on the floor or on a bed with your legs straight and your back supported. Pull your toes up to the ceiling, tighten your thigh muscles and press the back of your knee down in to the floor/bed. Hold for five seconds and then relax for five seconds. **Repeat ten times.**



2. Inner range squats

Sit on the floor or on a bed with your legs straight and your back supported. Place a rolled up towel under your knee so that your knee is in a slightly bent position. Push the back of your knee down in to the towel, lift your heel off the bed and pull your toes up towards you, straightening your knee. Hold for five seconds and then relax for five seconds. **Repeat ten times.**



3. Straight leg raise

Sit on a bed with your legs straight and your back supported. Pull your toes up to the ceiling, tighten your thigh muscles and press the back of your knee down into the bed. Keep your knee straight and lift your leg up off the bed about 30cm. Hold for five seconds and then relax for five seconds. **Repeat 10 times.**



4. Full range flexion

Sit on a bed with your legs straight and your back supported. Slide the heel of your operated leg up towards you, keeping your heel in contact with the bed. Bend your knee as far as is comfortable, hold for five seconds. Return to the starting position. **Repeat ten times.**



5. Hamstring curls

These can be performed either lying on your stomach or standing:

1. Slowly pull the heel of your operated leg up towards your bottom as far as you can by bending your knee. Hold for five seconds at the end of the range, and then let your leg return smoothly to the start position. **Repeat ten times.**
2. Repeat (1) but try now to hold your leg still for five seconds at various points in the range especially where you feel your leg is particularly weak. **Repeat ten times.**



6. Calf stretch

Stand with your feet a hip width apart. Take a step forwards with your non-operated leg. Keep the heel of your operated leg on the floor. Lean on to your non-operated leg until you feel a stretch in the back of the knee and the calf. Hold for five seconds and then relax. **Repeat ten times.**



7. Walking

As the pain in your knee decreases, progress from using two crutches to one crutch. Hold this in the hand opposite the operated knee. Once you are able to walk without a limp, stop using the crutches. Try to increase your walking distance gradually each day.

Phase 2 - Starting two weeks after surgery (or before if you feel comfortable)

1. Wall slides

Stand leaning with your back against a wall and your feet about 20cm away from the wall. Slowly slide down the wall bending both your knees as far as is comfortable. Hold for five seconds and return to the start position. **Repeat ten times.**



2. Lunges

Stand with your operated leg about 50 cm in front of your non-operated leg. Keep the heel of your operated leg off the ground. Lunge/bend forwards over your operated leg and then return to the start position. **Repeat ten times.**



3. Steps ups

Stand in front of a step. Step up with the operated leg first, then the good leg, step down with the operated leg first then the good leg. **Repeat ten times.**



Phase 3 – Starting four weeks after surgery (or before if you feel comfortable)

Balance

Practice standing on one leg once there is no pain or swelling:

1. with support
2. without support
3. eyes open
4. eyes closed

Aim to hold these positions for 30 seconds each.

When can I start doing sports again?

After five to six weeks you might be able to return to normal sporting activities. Phase these gently back in to your rehabilitation programme. A significant proportion of people still experience moderate discomfort at five to six weeks post surgery.

When can I return to work?

If your work is sedentary or desk-based you can return to work after a week. If your job involves heavy manual work and you are not experiencing pain or swelling you may return after two to three weeks. It is sensible to discuss with your employer a graded return to work starting with light duties first.

Following discharge from the hospital

Contact your GP if you experience:

- Persistent pain
- Swelling, oozing or redness around the wound
- Fever or a high temperature
- Calf pain or swelling

Returning your crutches:

Please return your elbow crutches when you no longer need them. They can be handed in to the physiotherapy department or at your follow up appointment with your surgeon.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will not be referred for outpatient physiotherapy unless your surgeon requests a course of physiotherapy. You will have a follow up appointment with a member of your surgeon's team in approximately six weeks from the date of your operation to discuss your arthroscopy findings.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your knee arthroscopy physiotherapy, please contact the **orthopaedic physiotherapy** team on **020 7188 5432** (Monday-Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk