

Knee Arthritis: Gentle Home Exercise Program

Regular movement can help decrease knee pain and stiffness, strengthen the muscles that support your knee, and make daily activities easier. Start slowly and choose exercises that feel manageable.

General Instructions

- Aim to do these exercises **3–5 days each week**.
- Begin with 1 set of 8–10 repetitions. Gradually work up to 2–3 sets as tolerated.
- Move slowly and smoothly. Do not hold your breath.
- Mild muscle tiredness or temporary soreness can be normal. Reduce the number of repetitions, range of motion, or activity level if pain or swelling increases and does not settle by the next day.

Stop and contact the office for severe pain, a locked knee, a fall or injury, marked swelling, redness or warmth, fever, or new inability to bear weight.

The Exercises



1. Quad Sets

Purpose: Strengthens the front thigh muscle.

- Sit or lie down with your painful leg straight.
- Tighten the muscle on the front of your thigh by pressing the back of your knee gently into the bed or floor.
- Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat: 8–10 times on each side.



2. Straight-Leg Raise

Purpose: Strengthens the front thigh and supports the knee.

- Lie on your back with one knee bent and the other leg straight.
- Tighten the thigh muscle of the straight leg.
- Slowly lift the straight leg about 6–12 inches off the surface.
- Hold for 2–3 seconds, then slowly lower.

Repeat: 8–10 times on each side.



3. Seated Knee Extension

Purpose: Strengthens the front thigh muscle.

- Sit upright in a sturdy chair with both feet on the floor.
- Slowly straighten one knee as far as comfortable.
- Pause for 2–3 seconds.
- Slowly lower your foot back to the floor.

Repeat: 8–10 times on each side.

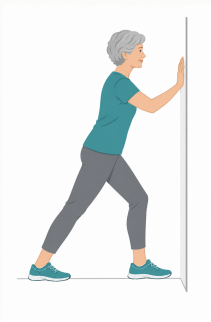


4. Seated Hamstring Stretch

Purpose: Improves flexibility in the back of the thigh.

- Sit near the edge of a sturdy chair.
- Place one heel on the floor with that knee mostly straight.
- Keep your back straight and lean forward slightly from your hips until you feel a gentle stretch behind the thigh.
- Do not bounce.

Hold: 20–30 seconds. Repeat: 2–3 times on each side.

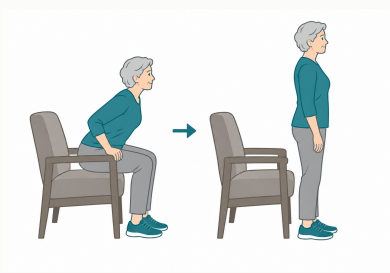


5. Calf Stretch

Purpose: Improves lower-leg flexibility and may make walking easier.

- Stand facing a wall, using the wall for support.
- Step one foot backward and keep that heel on the floor.
- Bend the front knee slightly while keeping the back knee straight.
- Lean forward until you feel a gentle stretch in the back calf.

Hold: 20–30 seconds. Repeat: 2–3 times on each side.



6. Sit-to-Stand

Purpose: Strengthens the legs for getting up from a chair.

- Sit in a sturdy chair with feet flat on the floor, about hip-width apart.
- Lean forward slightly and stand up slowly.
- Slowly sit back down with control.
- Use your hands on the chair arms if needed.

Repeat: 5–10 times.



7. Side Leg Raise

Purpose: Strengthens hip muscles that help support the knee.

- Stand beside a counter or sturdy chair and hold on for balance.
- Keep one leg straight and slowly move it out to the side.
- Keep your toes pointed forward and your body upright.
- Slowly return to the starting position.

Repeat: 8–10 times on each side.

Low-Impact Activities

Choose an activity you enjoy. Start with short sessions and gradually increase as tolerated.

- Walking on level ground
- Stationary cycling
- Water walking or water aerobics
- Swimming
- Tai chi or gentle balance exercises

A good starting goal: 5–10 minutes at a comfortable pace. Add a few minutes every week as tolerated.

Helpful Tips

- Warm up with 3–5 minutes of easy walking or gentle movement.
- Wear supportive, comfortable shoes.
- Use a cane or walking aid if recommended.
- Consider a cold pack wrapped in a towel for 15–20 minutes after activity if the knee is sore or swollen.
- **Consistency matters more than intensity.** Small amounts of regular exercise can improve pain and function over time.

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This handout is for general patient education and does not replace individual medical advice. Please contact the office with any questions about your exercise program.