

Guidelines for Knee Rehabilitation

Full recovery from your total knee replacement surgery is going to take months. This information will help you understand your recovery and care at home. The exercises included will help you be an active partner in your care and recovery.

Guidelines to protect your new knee joint

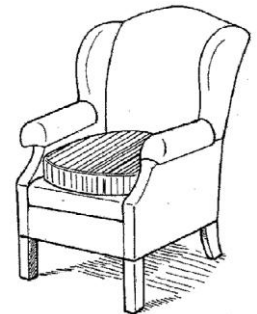
Your new knee has limited strength and range of motion right after surgery. By following these guidelines, you can help your knee heal well and return to your normal activity level.

Walking

- Your physical therapist will teach you to use a walker or crutches when you walk until your knee heals. Your therapist and your doctor will tell you how much weight you can safely put on your new knee. The length of time you will use a walker or crutches will be set by your doctor.
- Your balance might be unsteady for a while. To help you stay steady:
 - ↪ Use handrails on steps.
 - ↪ Wear low-heeled or flat shoes that are firmly secured to your feet.
 - ↪ Avoid wet or waxed floors.
- **Do not kneel on your new knee.**

Sitting

- Use a firm, sturdy chair with armrests. Use a cushion or a pillow to raise you up, if needed.



Range of Motion

You need to be able to bend and fully straighten your knee after replacement surgery to be able to make a full recovery.

• Bending

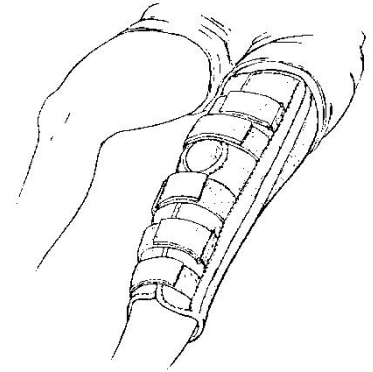
- ↪ Your goal is to be able to bend your knee at 90 degrees or more by 2 weeks after surgery, unless your doctor or physical therapist has set a different goal for you.
- ↪ Do not use force to bend your knee for the first 2 weeks.

• Straightening

- ↪ Your goal is to be able to fully straighten your leg joint as soon as possible after knee replacement. You will need to be able to do this to avoid limping.
- ↪ Never use a pillow under your knee when you rest. Your leg needs to be flat on the bed to prevent your knee from getting stuck in a bent position.

• Knee Immobilizer

- You may be instructed to wear a special knee brace called a knee immobilizer. How often you wear this and for how long will be set by your doctor.
- If you are wearing the brace, take it off now and then to inspect your skin for signs of redness or swelling.



Using Ice

Use cold regularly to help reduce pain and swelling. It is also best to use ice after exercise or heavy activity. You can use regular ice, gel ice packs, or a device called the Ice Man, which uses ice to cool a sleeve that wraps around your joint.

Always use a layer of fabric between the ice pack, gel ice pack, or Ice Man sleeve to protect your skin. Remember, gel ice packs are much colder than the Ice Man or regular ice and can quickly hurt your skin if placed directly on your skin.

The Ice Man can be used around the clock for the first 3 days after surgery. You can then use it as needed throughout your recovery. The temperature can be adjusted, so keep it as cold as you can tolerate for the best result. If you are using ice bags or gel packs instead, only apply them for 20 to 30 minutes of every hour.

Check your skin often for signs of redness or swelling. Please tell your doctor or physical therapist if you have increased pain, numbness, tingling, or redness that does not go away.

Exercises for knee rehabilitation

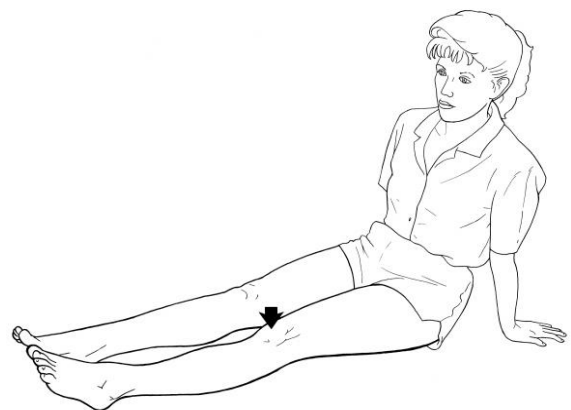
Getting back your strength and motion after knee replacement depends on you. Sticking to your exercise program will speed up your return to your normal activities.

Do 10 to 15 repetitions of each exercise and repeat the routine 3 times a day. Slowly increase how often you do the exercises as your knee becomes stronger.

- Do not wait until your therapist appointment to continue these exercises.
- You may need someone to help you with these exercises at first.
- If a lot of swelling occurs, slow down to let the swelling go down.
- These exercises can also be done on your other side.
- Remember to ice after exercise or heavy activity.

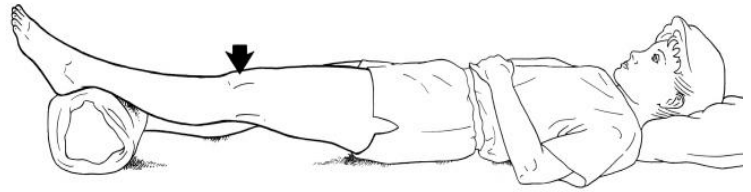
Quad Sets

- Sit or lie on a flat surface.
- Tighten the muscle on the top or front of your thigh and flatten your knee onto the bed. To get the idea, have someone place a hand under your knee. Push your knee into the person's hand.
- Hold for a count of 5.
- Relax.



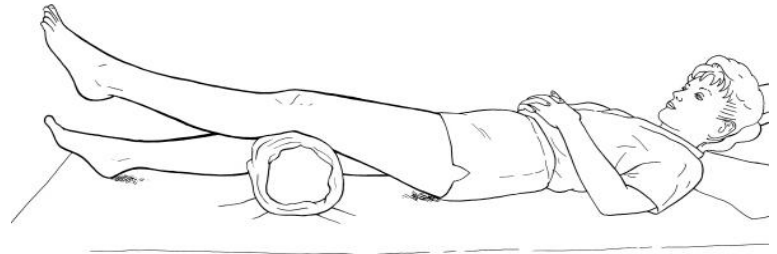
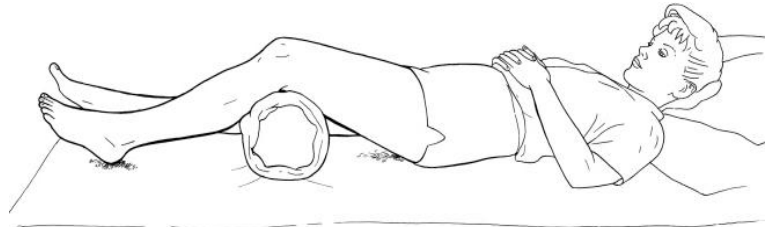
Quad Setting and Stretching

- Place the 3 pound coffee can or blanket roll under your heel and do a quadriceps set as described before.
- Push down at your knee.
- Hold tight for a slow count of 5.
- Relax.



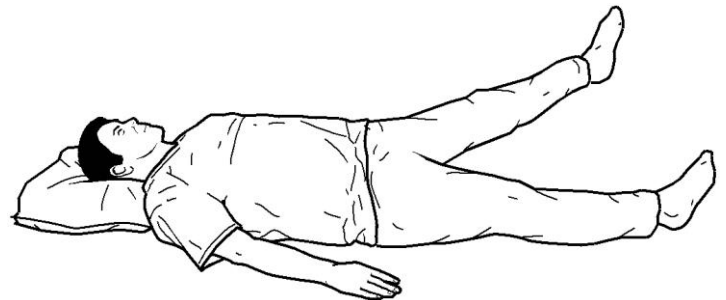
Short Arc Quads (Blanket Roll)

- Place a 3 pound coffee can or a blanket roll under your operated knee.
- Rest your thigh on the can and lift your heel off the bed. Straighten your knee as much as possible.
- Pause, and then lower heel.



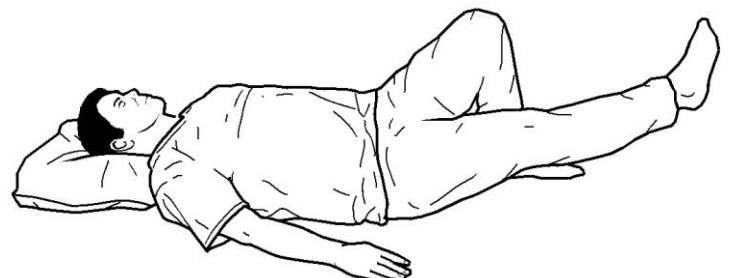
Leg-Side (Hip Abduction / Adduction)

- Lie down on your back with your legs straight. Place a plastic trash bag or piece of cardboard under your operated leg to reduce friction.
- Keep your toes pointed toward the ceiling.
- Slide your operated leg out to the side (like opening a pair of scissors). Bring the leg back to the starting position.



Straight Leg Raising

- Lie on your back with your operated leg straight. Bend your good leg at the knee.
- Lift your heel slowly off the bed. Raise your leg about 12 to 24 inches.
- Slowly lower your leg to the bed, keeping your knee straight.



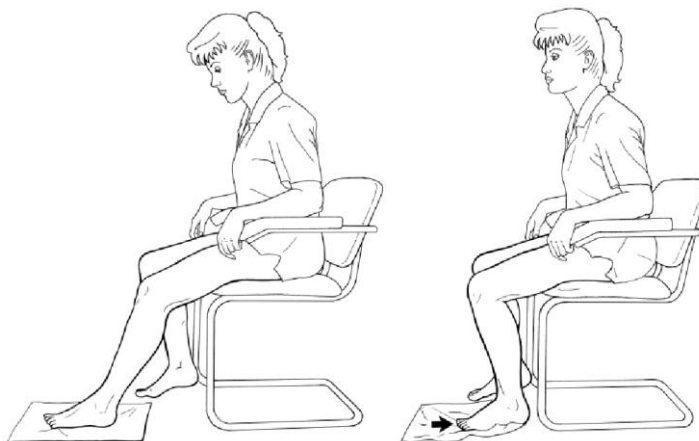
Knee Extension

- Sit on a chair or the side of a bed.
- Lift your foot and straighten your knee.
- Lower your heel



Foot Slide

- Sit in chair and place your foot of the operated leg on a plastic bag on the floor.
- Slide your foot back on the plastic, bending your knee as much as you can. Hold for a slow count of 5, then slide your foot forward gently. Repeat.
- Continue this exercise for 5 minutes.



Passive Extension

- Sitting on the edge of a chair or sofa, rest your heel on the edge of a coffee table or chair seat.
- Keep your toes pointed toward the ceiling.
- Allow gravity to straighten your knee.
- Hold the position for 30 minutes, 1 to 2 times each day.



Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.