



Royal Free London
NHS Foundation Trust

Physiotherapy after having knee arthroscopy

Information for patients

This leaflet provides you with physiotherapy advice to follow after having knee arthroscopy. If you would like further information, or have any particular worries, please do not hesitate to speak to your healthcare team.

Physiotherapy is a vital step after having surgery and is essential to ensure the success of the operation.

In hospital

You will see a physiotherapist on the day of your operation and they will:

- Advise you how to manage your pain and swelling when you go home.
- Teach you the correct way to carry out the exercises in this booklet enabling you to manage your physical recovery.
- Aim to fully straighten your knee and achieve a right-angle knee bend.
- Measure you for crutches, and show you how to get up and walk with them safely so you can manage at home. You can put as much weight on your operated leg as you can tolerate.
- If you have stairs at home your physiotherapist will practise them with you before you go.

This is the order you should go up and down stairs:

Going up:

1. Non-operated leg
2. Operated leg
3. Crutch/stick

Coming down:

1. Crutch/stick
2. Operated leg
3. Non-operated leg

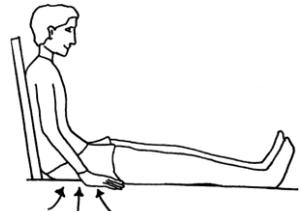
Exercises in hospital

In the initial period after your operation your circulation tends to slow down. It is important to maintain good circulation by doing these two exercises while lying in bed:

1. Move your ankle slowly in a large circle. Repeat 10 times for each ankle.



2. Tighten your buttock muscles, hold for five seconds then release. Repeat 10 times.



Repeat these every half an hour during the recovery period until you are regularly up on your feet.

Home exercises

Perform 20 repetitions of each exercise, three times a day.

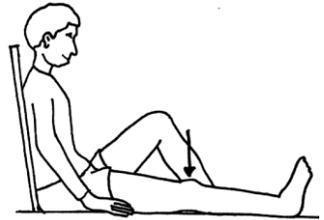
1. Foot and ankle

Move your ankle slowly in a large circle.



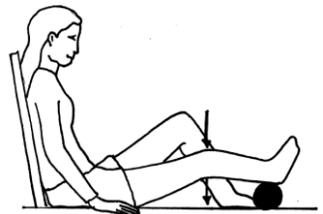
2. Knee straightening

Sit upright with your operated leg in front of you. Bring your toes towards you and press your knee down into the bed by tightening your thigh muscles. Hold for five seconds. Relax and repeat.



3. Knee hangs

Lying down, rest your heel on a thick rolled up towel. Allow your knee to 'hang'. Tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for five seconds. Relax and repeat.



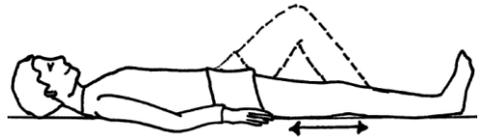
4. Knee bends in a seated position

Sit on a chair with a sock on the foot of your operated knee. Pull the foot towards the chair, bringing it underneath the chair if possible. You are aiming to achieve a knee bend of greater than 90 degrees. Relax and repeat.



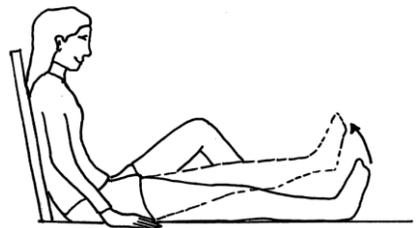
5. Knee bends lying on your back

Bend your operated leg, ensuring your knee faces upwards and then straighten your leg. Relax and repeat.



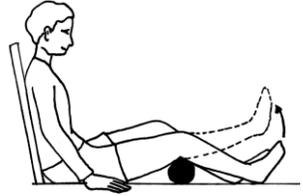
6. Straight leg raise

Keeping your knee straight, lift your operated leg six inches off the bed. Hold for five seconds. Relax and repeat.



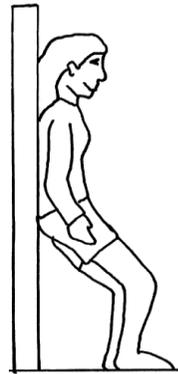
7. Quads strengthening

Place a rolled up towel under the operated knee. Straighten your knee by tightening the muscles at the front of your thigh. Hold for a few seconds and release. Repeat 10 times.



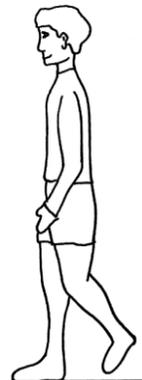
8. Wall squats

Stand leaning back against a wall. Slide down the wall as far as comfortable. Hold for five seconds. Return to starting position and repeat.



9. Practise standing on one leg

This could be when brushing your teeth or waiting for the kettle to boil.



Frequently asked questions

When can I return to work?

This is determined by the type of job you do. Depending on your diagnosis, one week should be enough, however if you have a manual job you may require more time off.

When can I drive a car?

You can usually drive for short periods of time five to seven days after your operation, provided the knee is pain-free and you have enough strength to comfortably control the foot pedals and make an emergency stop. It is also a good idea to check the terms of your car insurance, as some policies state that you must not drive for a specified period after an operation.

Can I cycle, swim or go back to the gym to strengthen my knee?

You can ride an exercise bike and/or a normal bike when you are able to bend your knee enough to do so. You should be able to return to other sports approximately four weeks after surgery, but this will depend on your initial diagnosis and your progress.

It is important you have good movement and strength before easing yourself back into sport. Swimming and other water activities should be avoided until your stitches have been removed and the wounds have fully healed. If you have any concerns about when you can return to specific activities, please talk to your consultant when you go to your next clinic appointment.

What if the pain or swelling does not improve?

It is common to have pain and swelling in your knee, however you may be overdoing it. Rehabilitation needs to take a smooth and structured path, so please follow these steps:

- Continue to take regular pain relief as prescribed.
- Elevate your leg so your foot is higher than your hip.
- Place ice cubes in a plastic bag and crush them. Place a tea towel over your dressing and apply the ice to the front or back of the knee for 10 minutes, two or three times a day until the swelling subsides. **Avoid ice if you have any skin problems or altered sensation around the knee.**
- If the pain and swelling increase, please contact your GP for further advice.

When can I stop using crutches?

You can gradually increase the amount of weight you put on your operated leg during walking and come off crutches as soon as you are confident and able to do so.

How long will my recovery take?

You will be able to return to most normal activities around the house within a few days of surgery, but do not overdo it.

Each patient is individual and will have a different pace and rate of recovery.

Your progress is largely dependent on how much effort you put in. In order to get the best outcome your self-motivation is crucial.

Do you have any further questions?

Please feel free to ask your physiotherapy team if you have any further questions.

Your physiotherapist is:

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Contact details

Barnet Hospital

Therapy services
Wellhouse Lane
Barnet, EN5 3DJ

Tel: 020 8216 4805

Chase Farm Hospital

Therapy services
The Ridgeway
Enfield, EN2 8JL

Tel: 020 8375 2199/1679

Royal Free Hospital

Physiotherapy department
Pond Street
London NW3 2QG

Tel: 020 7794 0500

Ext: 35284 (in-patient orthopaedic department)
34059 (out-patient department)

More information

For more information about the physiotherapy service at the Royal Free London, please visit our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/therapy-services/physiotherapy

Your feedback

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

Alternative formats

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please speak to a member of staff.

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