NHS
Leicestershire Partnership
NHS Trust

Caring for your knees

Information and advice



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Introduction

Many people can manage their knee pain most of the time. This leaflet gives you the best and most up to date advice on how to manage with it.

Facts

Generalised 'wear and tear' is very common as we get older. It is likened to getting grey hair, it happens to all of us. Some people get pain and stiffness, others don't and we cant always determine why.

The important message is that following advice in this booklet regarding sensible exercise, staying active, not being overprotective, and trying to lead as normal a life as possible have been shown to be the best ways of managing the problem.

Listed below are some do's and don'ts to help you understand and manage your knee pain.

Do's

- Stay as active as possible.
- Exercise your knee, sensible exercises will not lead to further damage.
- Gradually increase exercises and activity, but be sensible about it.
- Keep up with the exercises and advice for long term management.

Don'ts

- Don't be frightened of all pain, some ache/discomfort during exercise is normal and part of the treatment.
- Don't give in, doing less leads to stiffness and weakness.
- Don't rapidly change activity otherwise you can over do it and set yourself back.
- Don't panic if you have a set back, rest a few days from the exercises and then restart them again.

Exercises

The aim of the exercises listed in this booklet are to:

- Keep your knee as flexible as possible—it is important you are able to straighten your knee as flat as possible and bend it enough to do every day tasks.
- When exercising to gain extra movement you should feel a gentle stretch, hold this position for a short period (20-60 seconds) then release the pressure.
- Strengthen your leg muscles—this includes the powerful quadriceps muscles on the front of your thigh, and your hip and calf muscles.
- Decrease pain—when exercising for pain relief you should exercise to the edge of the pain, then release the pressure.

On commencing any exercise you may experience an increase in pain, this is normal and to be expected. As you continue to practice the exercises, the pain should quickly diminish at least to its former level.

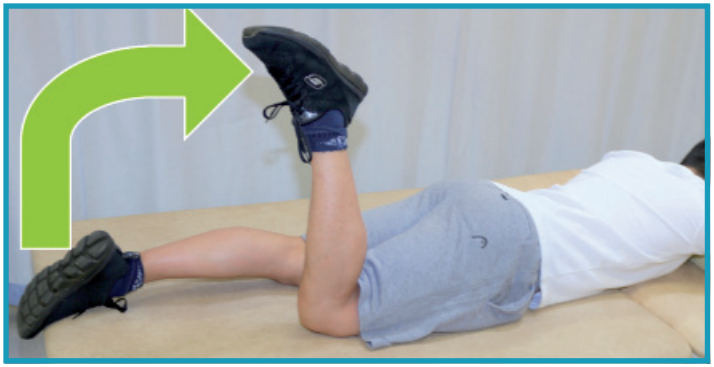
☐ Hamstring curls

Lying face down with your hips straight and knees together.

Bend your knee as far as possible keeping your hip flat on the bed.

Hold for ____ seconds. Repeat ____ times.

You can do this exercise with a ____ kg weight or a rubber exercise band around your ankle.



☐ Static quads

Lying on your back with your legs straight.

Bend your ankles and push your knees down firmly against the bed.

Hold for five seconds and then relax.



Repeat ____ times.

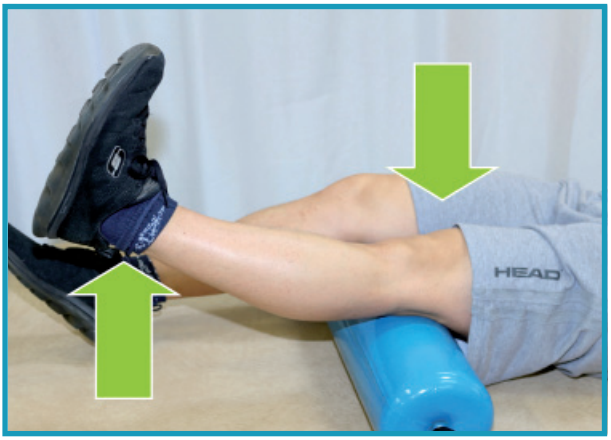
☐ Inner range quads

Lying or sitting with your back supported place a rolled up towel/wedge under the knee.

Pull the ankle up, straighten the knee and push it down against the towel.

Return to the starting position.

Repeat for one minute.



☐ Through range quads

Sit on a chair.

Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee.

Hold for five seconds and slowly relax your leg.

Repeat for one minute.



☐ Stand and sit

Sit with your arms crossed.

Stand up slowly then sit down on a chair.

This can be made easier or more difficult by changing the height of the chair.

Continue for one minute.



☐ Step ups

Stand in front of a step.

Step up with affected leg leading then bring the other leg up.

Step down with the affected leg, then the other.

Repeat for one minute.



☐ Step down

Stand on one leg on a step facing down.

Slowly lower yourself to the floor by bending your problem leg.

Return to starting position.

Repeat for one minute.



☐ Straight leg raise

Lying on your back with one leg straight and the other leg bent (you can vary the exercise by having your foot pointing either upwards, inwards or outwards).

Exercise your straight leg by pulling the toes up, straightening the knee and lifting the leg 20cm off the bed.

Hold for five seconds and then slowly relax.



Repeat ☐ times.

☐ Knee flexion



Sit on a chair with your feet on the floor.

Bend your knee as much as possible.

Repeat ☐ times.

Stretches

☐ Quads stretch

Stand holding onto a support.

Bend one knee and take hold of the ankle.



Do not lock the knee of the leg you are standing on.

Draw your heel towards your buttock.

Tilt your hip forwards so that you feel the stretch in the front of the leg.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat left ☐ times.

Repeat right ☐ times.

☐ Hamstring stretch



Stand with the leg to be stretched on a foot stool or on the floor in front.

Point the toes to the ceiling and push the heel towards the stool, keeping your knee straight.

Lean your body forwards until you feel a stretch.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat ☐ times.

☐ Calf stretch



Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you.

Take support from a wall or chair. Lean your body forwards and down until you feel the stretching in the calf of the straight leg.

Hold for 10 seconds.

Repeat left ☐ times.

Repeat right ☐ times.

General advice

There are many ways in which you can help yourself.

Weight reduction

Increased weight means increased pressure on your knees and a higher risk of joint disease. It is advisable to keep your weight to the recommended level for your height.

Footwear

Shoes with a low, broad heel and cushioned insole are the most suitable. High heels will put more strain on the knees, especially the kneecaps.

Night pain

Pain from your knee can disturb your sleep. A pillow beneath the knees may ease the pain temporarily but will lead to your knee becoming permanently bent and should never be used.

Stiffness

Joints, which remain still for prolonged periods of time, will stiffen. Regular gentle bends will lessen the discomfort.

Pain and swelling

Rest is the best treatment for a hot, swollen knee. Ice packs can be very useful in this instance, but you should always follow the instructions to avoid a burn. However, knee movement and strength should be maintained by continuing some of the more gentle exercises.

Notes

Notes

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.

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