

MCL Sprain: Exercise Program

Non-operative treatment for an inner knee ligament sprain

The MCL is the ligament on the inner side of your knee, and it heals well on its own. The keys are keeping your knee moving, especially getting it fully straight, and protecting it from sideways stress while it heals. Mild sprains usually take 2 to 4 weeks, and moderate sprains 4 to 8 weeks.

- Wear your hinged brace for walking. Take it off for exercises.
- Get your knee fully straight early. Don't let it rest bent for long periods.
- Until we clear you, avoid sideways stress on the knee: no cutting, pivoting, breaststroke kick, or sitting with your legs crossed under you.
- Ice 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off as needed.

Pain guide: Mild discomfort up to 3 out of 10 is OK during exercise. It should settle back to your usual level by the next morning. If it doesn't, do less next time.

EARLY Weeks 0 to 2

Heel Slide



Lie on your back. Slide your heel toward your buttock as far as is comfortable. Hold 5 seconds, then slide back out straight.

Do: 10 reps, 3 times a day

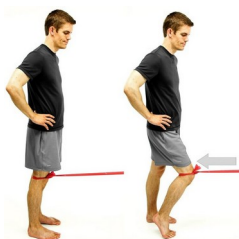
Thigh Tightener (Quad Set)



Lie with your leg straight. Tighten the muscle on top of your thigh and press the back of your knee down. Hold 5 seconds, then relax.

Do: 10 reps, 3 times a day

Band Knee Straightening



Loop a band behind your knee and anchor it in front. Start with your knee slightly bent, then push it back until fully straight. Hold 3 seconds.

Do: 15 reps x 2 sets

Seated Knee Bend



Sit with your foot on a towel on the floor. Slide your foot back under the chair as far as is comfortable. Hold 5 seconds, slide forward.

Do: 10 reps, 3 times a day

Straight Leg Raise



Bend your other knee. Tighten your thigh so your knee is locked straight, then lift your leg to the height of the other knee. Lower slowly.

Do: 10 reps x 2 sets, 2 times a day

If your knee bends as you lift, do thigh tighteners for a few more days first.

LATER Week 2 and on, once you are walking well

Mini Squat



Hold a counter, feet hip-width apart. Push your hips back and bend your knees a little, like starting to sit. Stand back up.

Do: 15 reps x 2 sets

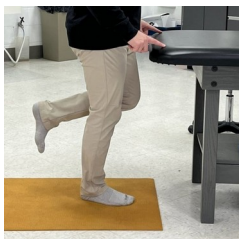
Go only as low as is comfortable. Keep your knees over your toes.

Calf Raise



Hold a counter. Rise up onto your toes as high as you can, then lower slowly.

Do: 15 reps x 2 sets. Progress to one leg



Single-Leg Balance

Stand next to a counter and lift one foot. Balance as long as you can, touching the counter only if you need to.

Do: 30 seconds, 3 times each side

Harder: close your eyes or stand on a pillow.



Stationary Bike

Set the seat so your knee is slightly bent at the bottom. Pedal with light resistance. If you can't go all the way around, rock back and forth.

Do: 15 to 20 minutes



Side-Lying Hip Raise

Lie on your side, bottom knee bent. Keep your top leg straight and slightly behind you, toes forward. Lift about 12 inches, lower slowly.

Do: 12 reps x 2 sets, each side

Don't let your top hip roll backward.

This program is a guide. Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain and let us know. Questions? Call (425) 656-5060.