

Knee Replacement: Your First Weeks Home

Total, partial, and kneecap replacement: exercises until physical therapy starts

Physical therapy usually starts 5 to 7 days after surgery. Until then, and on days between visits, do these exercises. In the first 2 weeks, the most important thing is controlling swelling, not how far your knee bends. Getting your knee fully straight comes first.

- Never put a pillow under your knee. Put it under your calf or heel so the knee can straighten.
- Ice 20 minutes on, 20 minutes off while awake.
- Don't force bending in the first week. Gentle and often beats hard and painful.
- Take short, frequent walks, then rest with your leg up. Avoid long periods of sitting or standing.

Pain guide: Soreness and swelling are normal after a joint replacement. Work steadily, not hard. Ice after exercise.

DO THESE 2 TO 3 TIMES A DAY



Ankle Pumps

Lying down, pull your toes up toward you, then point them away. Keep it smooth and steady.

Do: 20 pumps every hour while awake

Helps prevent swelling and blood clots.



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



Heel Prop (Straighten Your Knee)

Rest your heel on a rolled towel or pillow with nothing under your knee. Relax your thigh and let gravity straighten your knee.

Do: 5 to 10 minutes, 3 times a day

A straight knee comes first. Don't sleep with a pillow under your knee.



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



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

Start when your thigh is strong enough to keep the knee straight as you lift.



Short Arc Kick

Lie with a rolled towel or can under your knee. Lift your heel until your knee is straight. Hold 3 seconds, lower slowly.

Do: 10 reps x 2 sets, 2 to 3 times a day



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



Seated Kick-Out

Sit tall. Straighten your knee all the way and tighten your thigh. Hold 3 seconds, then lower slowly.

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



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



Walking with a Walker or Cane

Move the walker forward, step into it with your surgical leg, then your other leg. Once you switch to a cane, hold it in the hand opposite your surgical leg.

Do: Short walks, 3 to 4 times a day

Heel first, then toe. Even steps.



Stairs

Going up, step with your good leg first. Going down, step with your surgical leg first. Hold the railing. "Up with the good, down with the bad."

Do: As needed



Getting Into a Car

Push the seat all the way back. Back up to the seat, sit down, then turn and bring both legs in together.

Do: As needed

What comes next: Goals: knee fully straight, and bending to about 80 degrees by 2 weeks and past 110 degrees by 6 weeks. Your therapist will progress you from here.

CALL US: Call (425) 656-5060 right away for fever over 101°F, redness or drainage from your incision, calf pain or swelling, chest pain or shortness of breath (call 911), or pain that keeps getting worse.

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