

Early management of a soft tissue knee injury

i Information for patients



Early management of a soft tissue knee injury

The medical team that have reviewed your knee are happy that there is no serious bone injury.

You have been offered this advice booklet to help you in your early recovery.

Why do I need advice?

Following an injury, your knee can become stiff very quickly and the muscles of your thigh can also become weak. If not addressed, this can mean your recovery takes longer than it needs to.

The advice in this leaflet can help you to address these potential problems and reduce your pain.

What will this involve?

This advice will help you to get your knee moving and work on your strength. It will advise you on exercises and stretches to do at home.

What can I do to help myself?

The priority after a knee injury is to get the knee straight. This is best done as soon as possible by the stretch described below.

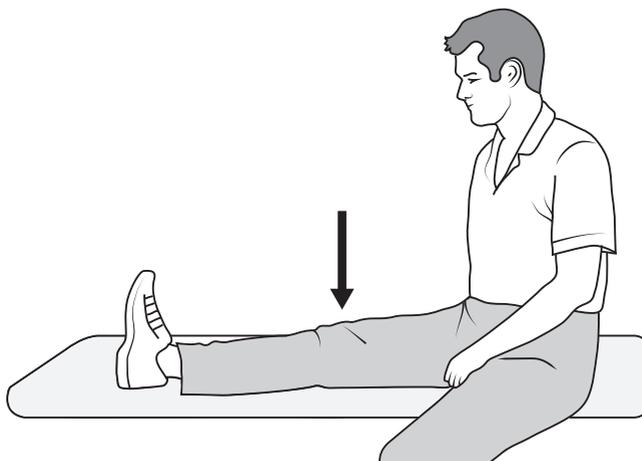
- Sit on the edge of a chair with your affected leg out in front of you.
- With your foot bent back towards you at the ankle, brace just above the knee with both hands and lean your body forwards.
- Hold this position for 20 seconds.
- Repeat this 2 or 3 times.



Remember: Getting your knee straight is easier in the early stages after an injury than leaving it until later. If you have painkillers that you can take they may make it easier to do your exercises.

To stop your knee getting weak try the exercise shown below.

- In a sitting or lying down position, Squeeze the muscles on the front of your thigh and push your knee down into the bed.
- Hold for 5 seconds then relax.
- Try to do 10 repetitions of this exercise. (See next picture)



You can also work on bending your knee (See picture below).



- In a sitting position try to pull your foot underneath you.
- This can be made easier by putting a plastic bag under your foot.

Remember that in all your exercises the priority is to get your knee straight.

How often shall I do my exercises?

It is best to do your exercises little and often. Try to do something every hour during the day.

Can I bear my weight down through my leg?

Yes you can bear as much weight down through your leg as your pain allows you to. Doing this will prevent your muscles getting weak.

This may mean using elbow crutches or a stick. If you need either of these, your nurse or physiotherapist will advise you how to use them.

Is it normal to get pain when I walk or exercise?

Yes it is normal to get pain when you exercise. You will probably have some pain after you have exercised, but this should be tolerable.

Pain does not mean you are damaging anything within your knee and your medical team want you to exercise your knee to help your recovery.

Doing your exercises in the early stages after an injury can mean you recover more quickly. This means your knee does not become a long-term problem.

After exercise, you may find that your pain is worse. This is normal. If your pain does not settle back to where it was within 2 hours after exercise then you may benefit from:

- doing shorter bursts of exercise
- not pushing into your pain too much
- discussing your pain relief with your GP

If you still find your pain severe or unmanageable, or are concerned about any lack of improvement with time consult your GP.

Is there anything else I can do for the pain from my knee?

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol can help.

One of the main problems after a knee injury can be the swelling that occurs.

Further advice on ice and elevation can be found in our **PIECE** guidelines. These are available from A&E and physiotherapy, and advise you on:

- **P**rotect and Rest
- **I**ce
- **E**arly Activity
- **C**ompression
- **E**levation

Please Note: In knee injuries “Protection” via a splint or bandage is not always necessary and may even slow your recovery.

If you have reduced sensation of the skin around your injury then ice should not be applied for longer than 20 minutes and the condition of your skin should be checked every 5 minutes.

How long will my recovery take?

A soft tissue injury to your knee can commonly take between 4 and 8 weeks to resolve depending on the severity of your injury. Recovery also depends on the type of injury you have had, how good your knee was before your injury and to some extent your general health.

Your overall recovery may take some time but advice on early movement from your medical and physiotherapy team can mean you recover more quickly. Early movement can also help to reduce the risk of long-term problems.

In summary

- Your medical team encourage you to attempt the exercises listed in this booklet.
- The priority is to get your knee straight.
- Using painkillers, elevation and ice to manage your pain and swelling may be helpful.
- Trying to stay on your feet, whether this means using a stick or elbow crutches, will stop you from becoming weak and can potentially help you recover more quickly.

Finally

Although the information in this booklet is based on current knowledge and best practice in managing typical conditions, all individuals and injuries are different. This may mean your symptoms do not follow a normal and predictable course. If this is the case and you have any concerns please contact your GP or physiotherapist about your best course of action.

Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about your exercises contact the Physiotherapy Department on:

Northern General Hospital

0114 271 5799

Royal Hallamshire Hospital

0114 271 3090

PhysioWorks

0114 237 1030 - then press **1** for NHS PhysioWorks

Alternative formats can be available on request.

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