

Premier
Orthopaedic
Pathway

Physiotherapy after anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction

Physiotherapy is vital to make the most of your 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 do the exercises in this book, enabling you to manage the first 2 weeks of your physical recovery.
- Aim to fully straighten your knee.
- Aim to 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 through your operated leg as you can tolerate.
- If you have stairs at home your physiotherapist will practice them with you before you go.

This is the order you should go up and down:

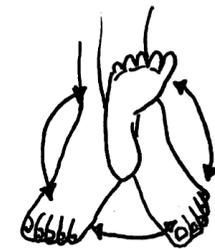
Going up:
Non-operated leg
Operated leg
Crutch/ stick

Coming down:
Crutch/ stick
Operated leg
Non-operated leg

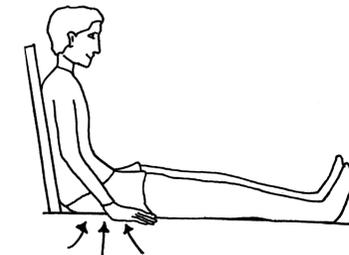
Exercises in hospital

In the initial post-operative period, your circulation tends to slow down. It is important to maintain good circulation by doing these two exercises whilst lying in bed:

1. Draw a circle with your ankle
Repeat x 10 on each leg



2. Tighten your buttock muscles, hold for 5 seconds then release. Repeat x 10



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

Going home

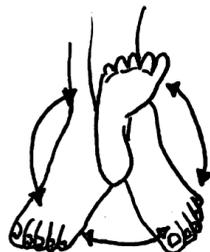
It is common to be discharged from hospital within 2 days of your surgery. You will be advised about your outpatient follow-up before you go home.

Home exercises

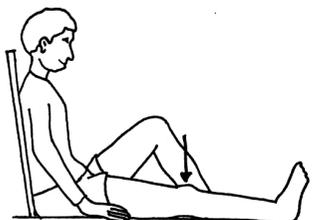
PERFORM 2 SETS OF 10 REPETITIONS, 3 TIMES EVERY DAY

a) Ankle circles

Draw circles with each of your ankles



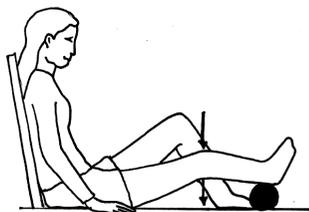
b) Knee straightening



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 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.

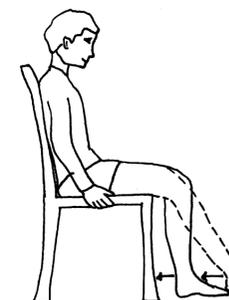
c) Knee hangs

Lying down. Rest your heel on a thick rolled up towel. Allow your knee to 'hang'. Tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.



d) Knee bends in sitting

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



e) Knee bends in lying



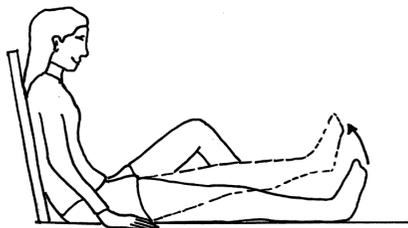
Bend your operated leg, ensuring your knee faces upwards and straighten. Relax and repeat.

f) Knee bends lying on your front

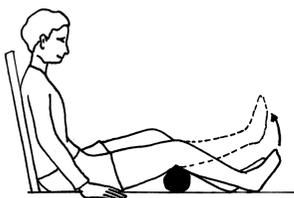


Lying on your front, control a slow knee bend, bringing your heel towards your bottom. Lower it down very slowly to the bed, relax and repeat.

g) Straight leg raise
Keeping your knee straight, lift your operated leg 6 inches off the bed. Hold 5 seconds. Relax and repeat.

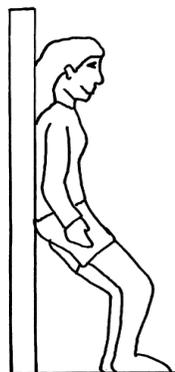


h) Quads strengthening

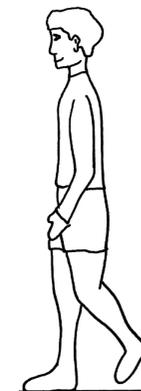


Place a rolled up towel under the knee. Straighten your knee by tightening the muscles at the front of your thigh. Hold for a few seconds and release. Repeat 10 times.

i) Wall squats
Standing leaning back against a wall. Slide down the wall as far as is comfortable. Hold 5 seconds. Return to starting position. Repeat.



j) Practice standing on one leg whenever you get the opportunity i.e. brushing your teeth or waiting for the kettle to boil.



Frequently asked questions

When can I return to work?

This depends on what work you do. Most people will go back to sedentary (i.e. sitting down) work within three weeks. You can discuss this at your clinic appointment.

When can I drive a car?

You will be able to drive when you can walk without crutches, putting full weight on your leg. You may be able to drive earlier if you have an automatic car and your left knee was operated on.

You will need to notify your insurance company about the operation.

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

During the first two weeks, please don't do any activity until you have been advised it is safe to do so by your surgeon or your physiotherapist.

In the initial period it is important to continue with the specific exercises you have been prescribed.

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.

- 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 2 or 3 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.

How long will my recovery take?

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

When can I stop using crutches?

You can gradually increase the amount of weight you put through your leg during walking and come off crutches as soon as you are confident to do so (2-3 weeks). You can discuss this at your Outpatient appointment.

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

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

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