



West Berkshire Physiotherapy Service Leaflet 9 Knee Sprain

A knee can be sprained with sudden movement such as twisting, causing the ligaments to be overstretched. This can cause inflammation and discomfort and in some cases instability. The ligaments help to support the knee and are found either side of the joint and also within the joint (the cruciate ligaments). Ligaments help to provide balance so this can also be affected after injury.

Soon after injury it is important not to re-aggravate the ligaments, so avoid twisting the knee and any sudden movements.

If your doctor has suggested painkillers it is important that you take them regularly to get the full benefit.

If you follow the advice given on the sheet it will speed up your recovery and minimize future problems *such as stiffness and weakness.*

Protection

It is important to use any supports that may have been given to you, such as crutches. It is not necessary to completely avoid moving the injured part. In fact gentle exercise, *such as gentle bending and straightening the knee*, will be beneficial

Rest

For the first few days after injury, it may help to restrict your normal activities, particularly those involving stress being placed on the injured area or movements that cause or increase pain, such as weight-bearing through the affected part.

Although the injured area should be rested during the early stages, the joints above and below should still be moved. As you start to feel better, gradually move the affected part more and gradually start to take more weight when you walk.

Ice

Use ice to reduce the swelling/bruising/muscle spasm and pain. Apply crushed ice or frozen peas in a damp towel for up to 20 minutes. This can be applied every two hours as necessary. Do not put ice directly onto the skin.

Compression

For the first 72 hours use an elastic bandage or tubigrip to apply compression to the injured area. This compression should be a minimum of six inches above and below the site of injury, making sure that even pressure is felt throughout.

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Check the area below the injured site for coldness/pallor which may suggest that the compression is too tight.

Remove the compression whilst lying down.

Do not apply compression if you have any problems with your circulation or if you have had a recent thrombosis.

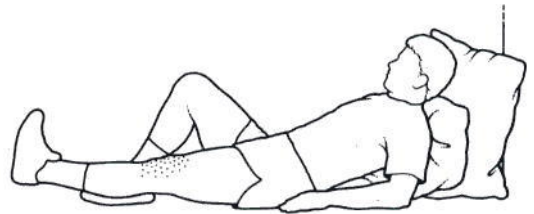
Elevation

Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart as much as possible for the first 72 hours. Make sure you support nearby joints while doing this by using pillows etc.

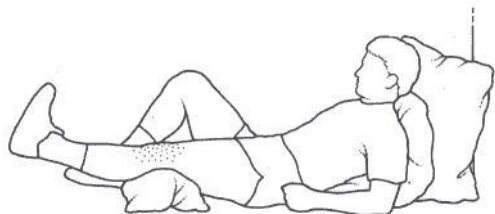
Exercises

Once any swelling has begun to settle and pain has moderated, it is important to begin exercises as below. Avoid going into any sharp pain and all exercises should only cause mild discomfort that settles quickly.

1. Lying on your back with the affected knee out straight. Turn the foot so that the toes are pointing out. Keeping the leg completely straight, lift off the bed six inches and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly lower.

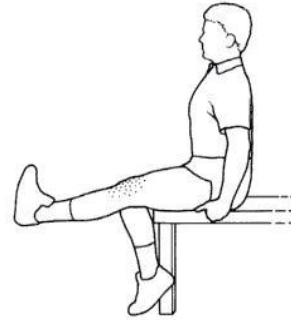


2. Use cushion or rolled up towel under knee. Pull foot up, brace knee and raise heel to straighten knee. Hold for 5 seconds. Slowly lower.



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3. Sit on a chair. Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscles and straighten your knee. Hold for approximately 5 seconds, then lower your leg and relax.



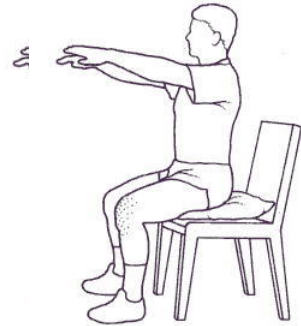
4. Stand on your affected leg only and try to balance. Once you are able to balance for 30 seconds, try with your eyes closed.



When you are able to perform 20 repetitions of the Stage 1 exercises easily – then progress to Stage 2 as below.

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5. Sitting with your arms crossed. Slowly lean forward, stand up, then slowly sit down. Try not to drop into the chair. Progress by straightening out the unaffected leg and pushing up mainly with the affected leg. The lower the chair, the more difficult the exercise.



6. Place affected leg on a shallow step. Step down backwards, leading with the good leg (slowly) until the heel touches the floor, then return to the starting position.



These exercises should be performed twice daily, starting with 5 repetitions and increasing the number as tolerated.

Continue the exercises until your symptoms resolve. This may take up to 10 weeks. Only return to sporting activities when you have full movement and good balance.

Consult your GP again if you are continuing to have problems, such as the joint feeling unstable, having balance problems or the same injury reoccurring frequently.



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