



West Hertfordshire  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Trust



A guide to...

# Physiotherapy after your Total Knee Replacement

## *Patient Information*

Watford General Hospital  
Hemel Hempstead Hospital  
St Albans City Hospital  
West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit

## Knee Replacement Recovery

Following a knee replacement physiotherapy is essential. Your physiotherapist will be able to guide your rehabilitation but they can not do the exercises for you. Good motivation is key to a rapid recovery and you have a very important contribution to make to the success of your surgery.

The programme for recovery that is outlined below should be regarded as a guideline – patients are individual and each has a different pace and rate of recovery.

The average length of stay for a total knee replacement is approximately one to three days, however, this is dependant on your previous level of fitness, medical complications and home circumstances. You will only be discharged when the team is happy you can care for yourself at home.

When you get home if you notice there is increased pain or swelling in your calf or you are worried about signs of infection (red, hot, swollen and/or oozing wound) then contact your GP.

You will be referred to outpatient physiotherapy at West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit in Jacketts Field, Abbots Langley on discharge.

## Physiotherapy

The aim of inpatient physiotherapy will be to ensure you are able to walk safely with the help of an aid. You should be able to manage the stairs confidently if you need to at home and you should be able to get a straight knee and approximately 90 degrees (right angle) of bend too. You will also be advised on how to control your pain and swelling.

For safety reasons it is recommended that you wear slippers or shoes with a back. **Your foot or leg may swell following the operation so slightly larger footwear may be required.**

Should you struggle to achieve sufficient bending whilst you are in hospital you may need to be placed on a passive knee bending machine (CPM). This machine does all the work and can be used as an extra to your exercises. However, it **does not** replace your exercises. Your physiotherapist will decide if this treatment is appropriate for you .

A reminder of the circulation and simple leg exercises, which you should aim to perform hourly:

- Take 4 deep breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth
- Move your ankles up and down 10 times
- Circle your ankles 5 times each way
- Squeeze your buttocks together 5 times.

## Exercise, Pain and Swelling Advice

- Elevate your leg as much as possible to help reduce swelling. The most effective way to do this is by spending one hour in the morning and afternoon lying flat on the bed.
- Use pain-killers and ice packs to reduce the pain and swelling before you exercise.
- You can use ice or a bag of frozen peas for 10-15 minutes. Do **not** put ice directly on the skin and check you have normal sensation before using the ice. It is normal for the area to go red and slightly numb during icing. After the ice has been on for five minutes check the skin. If you notice that the area has gone white remove the ice immediately.
- It is normal that you can feel pain, discomfort or stretching during and after your exercises. However, if you experience an pain that persists (e.g. more than 30 minutes), or increases in intensity, it is an indication to change the exercise by doing it less forcefully or less often. If this does not help then please discuss this with your physiotherapist.
- Do short, frequent sessions spread throughout the day rather than one long session.
- Fit your exercises into your daily routine - make it a habit!
- Try and take regular walks and increase the distance as you feel able but this does not replace your exercises (see next page).

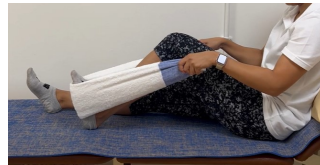
## Knee Exercises

Hold each exercise for two to three seconds and repeat 10 times, three times a day. You can watch these videos by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



### Assisted Knee Flexion

- Lie on your back or sat upright with your leg straight. Place a towel around your foot.
- Bend your knee as far as possible whilst pulling the towel to bend the knee even more on your operated leg.



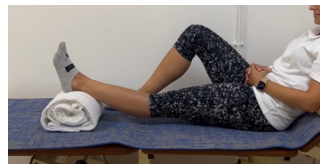
### Active Knee Flexion

- Lie on your back or sat upright with your leg straight.
- Slide your heel to your bottom by bending your knee as far as possible on your operated leg.
- Slowly return to the starting position.



### Knee Extension Stretch

- Place a rolled towel under your ankle of the operated leg.
- Straighten your knee by tightening your thigh muscles.



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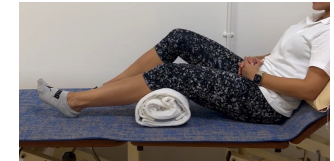
### Static Quads

- Lie on your back or sit upright with your leg operated straight.
- Bend the ankle towards you and push your knee into the surface, contracting the muscles of your front thigh.



### Inner Range Quads

- Lie on your back or sit upright with your operated leg straight. Place a towel roll under the operated knee.
- Straighten the operated knee using your front thigh muscles and lift the lower half of the leg up.
- Keep the back of your knee against the towel roll.



**Once you have finished this exercise do not leave your operated knee resting on the towel as this will stop you achieving a straight knee.**

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### Straight Leg Raise

- Lie on your back or sit upright with your leg operated straight. Activate your thigh muscles as in the exercise static quads.
- Lift the leg off the floor keeping the leg straight.



### Through Range Quads

- Sitting in a chair straighten your operated leg, tightening your thigh muscles.
- Return to the starting position in a controlled manner.



## Stairs

To go upstairs

1. Good leg
2. Operated leg
3. Stick/elbow crutch

To go downstairs

1. Stick/elbow crutch
2. Operated leg
3. Good leg

If you are unsure about any advice or information, please arrange to contact fracture clinic or contact the Physiotherapy department using the below contact details.

### How to contact us

West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit  
Jacketts Field  
Abbots Langley  
Hertfordshire  
WD5 0PA

**Tel:** 01923 378130

**Email:** [westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net)

**Website:** [www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/physiotherapy](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/physiotherapy)

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217187** or email [westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)



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