

Physiotherapy after non-complex knee arthroscopy

Information for patients

This sheet provides you with information about physiotherapy advice and exercises after non-complex knee arthroscopy. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Orthopaedic Physiotherapy Team (see page 7).

What is a non-complex knee arthroscopy?

A non-complex knee arthroscopy is a straight-forward keyhole operation carried out by a surgeon to examine the inside of the knee joint. Sometimes following this examination, the surgeon might carry out a minor procedure inside the knee.

Patients undergoing a non-complex knee arthroscopy are not usually seen by a physiotherapist, however if you have concerns about managing after your operation please speak to your nurse.

The following advice and exercises are designed to help prevent possible complications and improve the outcome of your surgery by helping you to return early to an active lifestyle. It is important that you follow this advice as you play a major part in your own recovery. We hope that the following information will help you to achieve your full potential.

Advice for immediately after your operation

Your wound

The small skin cuts used for arthroscopy will have been closed with either dissolvable stitches, stitches that need to be removed, or steri-strips (adhesive paper "butterfly" stitches). You will be given specific advice by the nursing team if you need to have the stitches removed and when you can get the incisions wet during bathing or showering.

The bandage should usually be removed 48 hours after surgery so you can work on bending your knee more easily.

Control your pain

- Take your pain medication: Make sure you keep taking the pain relief medication prescribed by your ward doctor when you are discharged home. Try to take your painkillers about 30 minutes before exercising.
- Use an ice pack: It can help to apply an ice pack to your knee for 15 to 20 minutes every two hours to reduce swelling and ease any pain. Before using it, make sure you have full feeling in your leg and knee with no numbness. Do not put the ice pack directly on your skin; wrap it in a damp tea towel or pillowcase before using it. It is important that you check your skin before, during and after you use an ice pack to make sure you do not have any unexpected reactions. If you have any concerns, please seek medical advice.

Reduce swelling

- Rest and raise your leg keeping the knee straight (do not place pillows or cushions under your knee, instead place them under the ankle).
- Use an ice pack as described above.

Walking

You should be able to put your full weight on your leg immediately after the operation, unless advised otherwise by your surgeon. You should be able to walk without a limp and without a walking aid, unless needed previously due to other medical conditions. Keep mobile and active and return to your activities of daily living as soon as possible. This will help prevent blood clots and improve your recovery.

Stairs

You should be able to manage stairs. Lead with your non-operated leg when going up and lead with your operated leg when going down, until you feel able to return to your usual technique. If you are worried about managing the stairs at home, please discuss this with your physiotherapist.

Driving

You should not return to driving until you are able to safely control and fully operate the vehicle. You must be able to perform an emergency stop. You may need to inform your insurance company of your surgery to ensure your cover is valid, so please check.

Return to work

If your job involves sitting for most of the day, you should be able to return to work after 3 to 4 days. If you have a physical job, you may be able to return to lighter duties with minimal walking for the first 3 to 4 days.

If you require a fitness for work certificate, your surgeon or GP can provide this. You can also speak to your physiotherapist if you need further advice on returning to work.

Exercises to complete after surgery

To optimise your recovery, it is important to do these exercises as instructed.

Exercises to start immediately after your operation (Days 0 to 7)

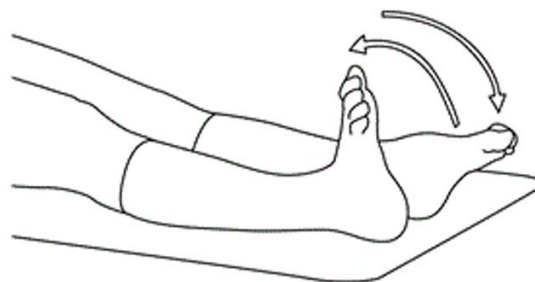
For each exercise complete up to ten repetitions, three times per day.

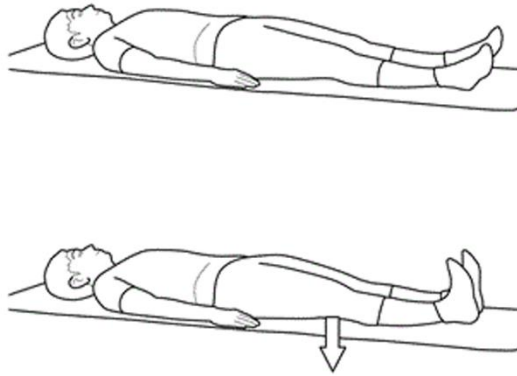
Lying exercises:

Exercise 1 – Ankle pumps

Paddle your ankles up and down.

You can do this while you are on the bed or in the chair.





Exercise 2 – Quadriceps (thigh) squeeze

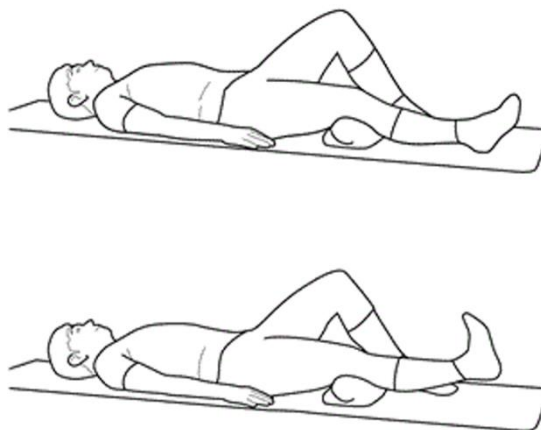
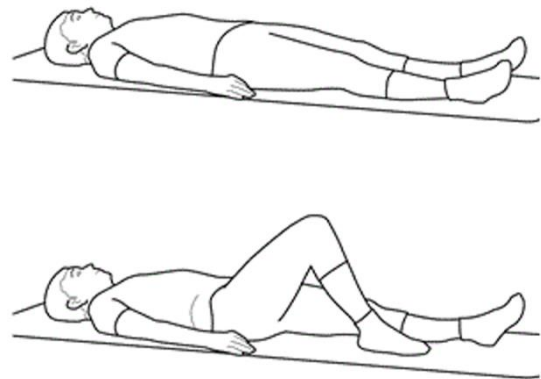
With your legs straight, bring your toes up towards you and push your knee down firmly against the bed to tense the thigh muscles.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Exercise 3 – Heel slide

Lie with your legs straight out in front of you.

Slide your heel up towards your bottom, bending your knee as much as possible.



Exercise 4 – Inner range quads

With your bent knee over a rolled towel, tighten your thigh muscle and lift your foot off the bed.

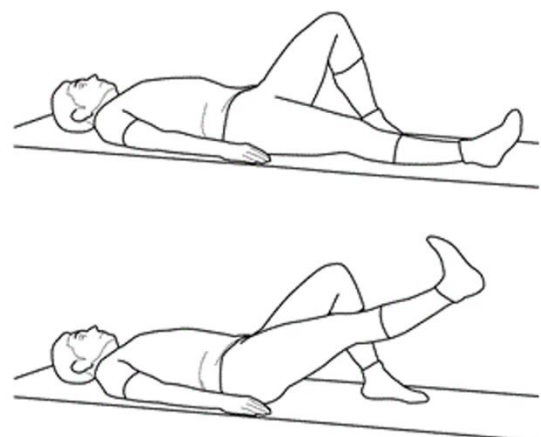
Keep your knee in contact with the rolled towel. Hold for 5 seconds.

Exercise 5 – Straight leg raise

With your operated leg resting straight on the bed, and the other leg bent, tighten your thigh muscle and lift your leg straight and up off the bed.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Tip: if you cannot lift your leg up, practice the inner range quads exercise instead.

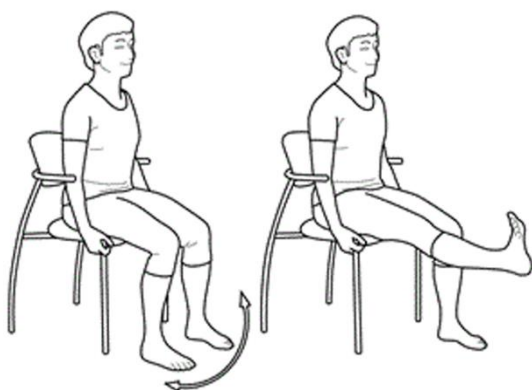
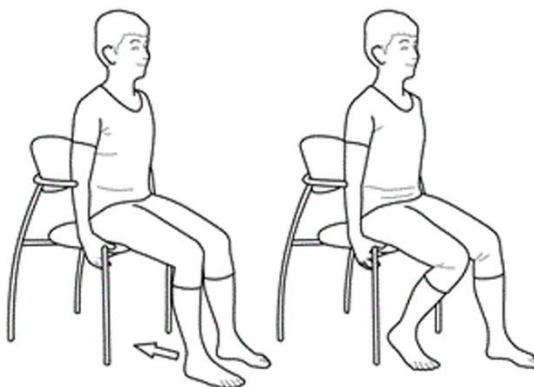


Sitting exercises

Exercise 6 – Seated heel slide

Sitting in a chair, slide your foot backwards on the floor increasing the bend of your knee as much as possible.

Hold your knee bent for **10** seconds before sliding your foot forwards again.



Exercise 7 – Seated knee extension

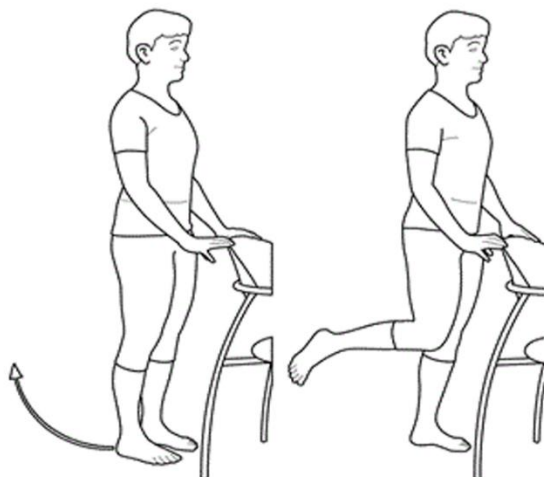
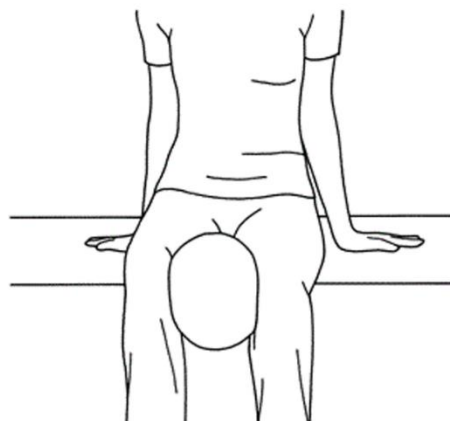
Straighten your knee as much as possible, lifting your foot off the ground. Keep the back of your thigh on the chair.

Hold for **5** seconds.

Exercises to start 3 days post-operatively (Day 4 and onwards)

Exercise 8 – Ball or cushion squeeze

Sit on a chair with a ball or cushion between your knees. Squeeze the ball or cushion. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.



Exercise 9 – Standing knee bend

While holding onto a sturdy support, bend your operated knee as far back as possible.

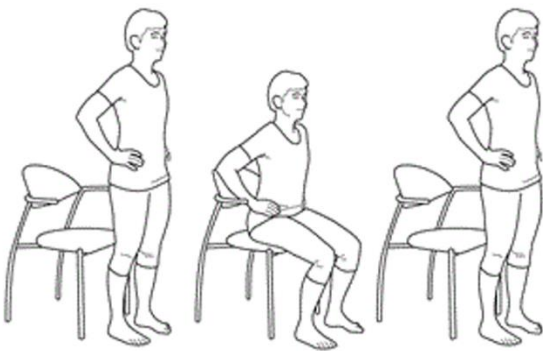
Exercise 10 - Mini squats

While holding onto a sturdy support, place your feet shoulder-width apart. Keep your back straight. Bend your knees, keeping your feet flat on the ground. Hold the squat for **5** seconds, and then push back up to standing.



Exercises to start 1 week post-operatively (day 8 and onwards).

If you feel as though the previous exercises are not challenging enough, you may find it useful to try the following higher-level exercises:

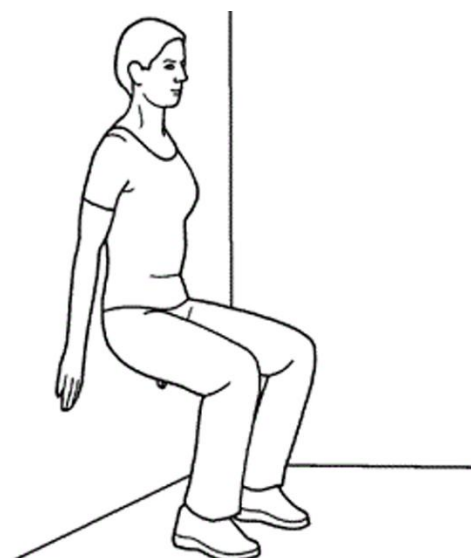


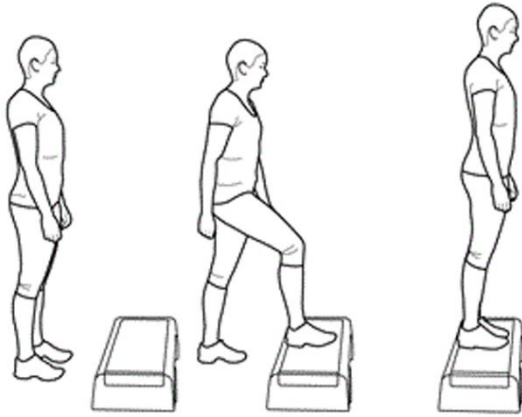
Exercise 11 – Unsupported sit to stand

Sit on a chair with your arms across your chest. Lean forward and slowly rise from the chair and then sit down again. You can use a lower chair to make this exercise harder.

Exercise 12 – Wall squats

Stand with your back against a wall, feet shoulder-width apart and your feet about 30cm away from the wall. Slowly slide your back and shoulders down the wall as far as comfortable. Hold for 5 seconds. Slowly slide back up to the starting position.





Exercise 13 – Step-ups

Stand facing a step or the stairs, holding onto a rail. Step up with your operated leg, followed by your other leg. Step back down with your non-operated leg, followed by your operated leg.

Exercise 14 – Single leg stance

Stand on your operated leg without support for as long as you can. Ensure you have a sturdy support to reach out for if needed.

Tip: To make it harder stand on a soft surface like a pillow.



Return to gym

If you attend the gym regularly already, and you are not experiencing any complications, you may return to the gym after 1 to 2 weeks. You can try the following exercises:

- treadmill
- cycling
- lunges
- balance exercises on a gym ball
- resisted hamstring and quadriceps strengthening (for example, hamstring curls or leg press).

Return to sports

You can return to sports 3 to 6 weeks after your operation if you have achieved full strength and movement in your knee and are no longer experiencing pain, swelling or any other complications. If you are unsure, please contact us.

Contacts

We hope this information has been helpful. Should you have any further questions, please contact the Orthopaedic Physiotherapy Team where you had your operation.

Princess Royal University Hospital

Farnborough Common

Orpington

BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 864632 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Orpington Hospital

Sevenoaks Road Orpington

BR6 9JU

Tel: 01689 866255 (Monday to Sunday, 8am to 4.30pm)

King's College Hospital

Denmark Hill

London

SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 2368 (Monday to Sunday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252

Email: kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net

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