

# Knee Arthroscopy Exercise Programme

Regular exercises are necessary to restore your knee mobility and strength. Most exercises can be carried out at home. This program may be supervised by a physiotherapist initially or for several weeks, depending on your progress. As you increase the intensity of your exercise program, you may experience temporary set-backs. If your knee swells or hurts after a particular exercise activity, you should decrease or stop the activity until you feel better. Contact your Physiotherapist if the symptoms persist. The following guide will help you to understand your postoperative exercise program.

**Ice** is a natural anaesthetic that helps relieve pain. Ice also controls swelling by slowing the circulation in your knee. Never apply ice directly onto skin, or leave on for longer than 20 minutes. To ice your knee use a bag of frozen peas or a plastic bag filled with crushed ice. Then wrap the ice bag with a small moist towel to protect your skin, and cover your knee with a blanket for the first 2 to 3 days after arthroscopy.



**The Bandage:** leave the bandage undisturbed until the following morning then replace it with the tubigrip which should only be worn during the day time and removed at night when going to bed. Keep the incisions covered with waterproof plasters to allow you to shower until the skin heals.

**Driving** is usually possible after you can do an emergency stop, which may take a few days or longer. However, it may take several weeks before your driving is back to normal, as your leg muscles will be a bit weaker and slower for a while after arthroscopic surgery. If your knee is swollen after arthroscopy your thigh muscles will be inhibited and more difficult to rebuild until the swelling goes down.

## Initial Exercises

Perform all the exercises, as shown, regularly throughout the day (approx. 10 times each exercise, 6 times per day). Sit or lie with your leg elevated, to allow your foot to be higher than your hip. Keep your walking to a minimum for the first 48 hours to prevent swelling increasing. When climbing stairs lead with the good leg initially. When descending, lead with the operated leg until you feel able to manage stairs normally.

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### **CIRCULATION EXERCISES**

Sit or lie with your leg elevated, to allow your foot to be higher than your hip, and practise pedalling your feet up and down at regular intervals throughout the day.



### **BUTTOCK TUCKS**

Whilst lying down tighten your buttock muscles. Hold for 5 seconds and relax.



### **QUADRICEPS EXERCISE**

Lying on your back with your knee straight push your knee firmly down against the bed to tense your Quads (thigh) muscle. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax.



### **STRAIGHT LEG RAISE (SLR)**

With your knee straight, push it down to tense the Quads, as above, pull your toes up towards you and slowly raise your straight leg 20 cm off the bed. Hold for 5 seconds and lower.



### **TERMINAL KNEE EXTENSION (INNER RANGE QUADS)**

Lying or sitting on the bed, place a rolled up towel under your knee allowing your heel to rest on the bed. Tighten your knee to straighten it, keeping the back of your knee on the towel and raising your heel off the bed. Hold for 5 seconds.



### **KNEE FLEXION AND EXTENSION EXERCISES**

Lie on your back, place a sliding board on the bed, or a plastic sheet under your heel. Bend your knee by sliding your foot up and down the board or plastic sheet. Aim to increase the range of movement to full bend by 2 weeks postoperatively. If you find bending difficult, try putting a strap around your foot and, as you slide up, assist the movement by pulling on the strap.

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### **KNEE FLEXION AND EXTENSION EXERCISES IN A CHAIR**

Sit in a chair and bend your knee to allow your foot to rest on the floor. Practice bending and straightening your knee. Pull your toes up towards you and tighten your thigh to straighten your knee. Hold straight for 5 seconds, relax and bend as far as you are able by sliding your foot on the floor.



### **EXTENSION**

To make sure your knee is straightening fully, try lying or sitting on the bed with your heel only supported on a pillow or rolled up towel, to allow your knee to relax into a straight position.

## **Intermediate Exercises**

When most of the swelling has subsided and the pain has lessened you should progress to intermediate exercises (10 – 14 days post-operatively), but in combination with initial exercises.

**WALKING:** normal walking can be resumed after 2 weeks. Progress distance as you feel able. Wear comfortable shoes

**TRAINING** in the gym can commence at this stage, if you knee is not swollen and painful. Start with low impact exercises, avoid treadmill at this stage.

**SWIMMING** is allowed once the wounds are well healed, but avoid breaststroke at this stage.



### **PARTIAL SQUAT WITH A CHAIR**

Hold onto a sturdy chair or counter with your feet slightly apart. Bend both of your knees gently, making sure you maintain a straight posture, to keep your leg alignment correct. Do not bend any lower than 90 degrees. Hold for 5 – 10 seconds, then slowly return to standing.



### **WALL SLIDE**

Stand leaning with your back against a wall, feet about 20 cms away from the wall. Slowly slide down the wall allowing your hips and knees to bend gently. As your knee regains strength, aim to slide further down until your hips and knees are at right angles. Return to starting position.



### **STEP UPS: FORWARDS**

Stand in front of a 20 – 40 cm step. Step up leading with your operated leg followed by the other leg. Step down with the good leg first. Return to start position.



### **STEP UPS: LATERAL**

Face sideways to the step, with your operated leg nearest the step. Step up sideways with the operated leg, followed by the other leg. Step down leading with the good leg first. Return to start position.



### **CYCLING**

If you have access to a static bicycle, start on a low resistance for a short time (5 to 10 minutes). Set the saddle to a comfortable height to allow a full revolution. Progress resistance and time as your knee improves.

## **Advanced Exercises (4 weeks onwards)**

Start increasing resistance by using weights around your ankle when practising the Quadriceps exercises. Start with a 2lb weight and 10 repetitions, increasing weight and repetitions as able.

**GYM:** continue with training, but avoid high impact activities.

**SWIMMING** is a good exercise at this point. Avoid breast stroke leg kick.

**ROAD CYCLING** begin on flat roads, short distances.

**RUNNING** should be avoided for 4 - 6 weeks because of the high impact and shock forces transmitted.

**HIGH IMPACT SPORTS** specific training can be introduced after 6 weeks.