

Helping your knee to recover after a ligament sprain or rupture

Information for patients



This leaflet gives you advice and exercises to help your knee to recover after your injury. Ligaments can be partially or completely torn due to sudden stretching which can occur if you fall or twist awkwardly on your knee.

After a ligament sprain or rupture it is very important that you use your knee as normally as possible. At first your knee will feel stiff and painful but it is important that you continue to move it as this will aid your recovery. The ligaments within your knee joint and around it need to be kept moving so that they don't heal in tightened positions. You may or may not be given a brace depending on whether it is necessary. You should follow the advice below, but if you are wearing a brace, remove it for the exercises.

Walking

- Walking will not damage your knee further.
- Always try to walk normally – i.e. heel down first.
- In the early stages after injury excessive weight bearing may cause increased pain and swelling. You may be given crutches for a short time to help with this.
- Gradually increase your activity as the pain and swelling subside.
- Do not return to sport until you are fully fit or when advised by your physiotherapist.

Swelling and pain

Your knee will probably swell up after the injury. When this happens, keep your knee raised as much as possible to keep the swelling to a minimum. One way of doing this is by keeping your leg raised – for example on a footstool or on pillows. Your knee should be higher than your hip.

Pain and swelling can be eased by applying ice for approximately 15 minutes 3-4 times a day. Wrap the ice in a damp towel to protect your skin.

An elastic bandage / Tubigrip will help to control swelling and support your knee. These are available from most chemists or you may have been given one at the hospital.

Basic painkillers will also help. Speak to your GP or Pharmacist if you require further advice about pain relief.

Exercise

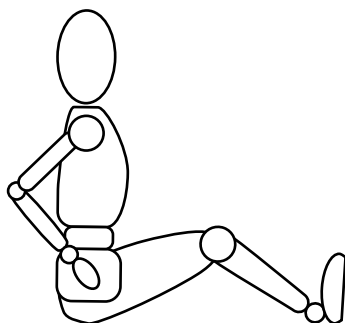
It is important that you start to exercise your knee as soon as possible. By exercising and regaining normal movements, the feeling of stiffness and pain will gradually settle.

The exercises will be most effective if practiced regularly. We suggest doing the exercises 3-4 times a day. It is better to repeat the exercises a few times every hour, rather than once a day for a longer period.

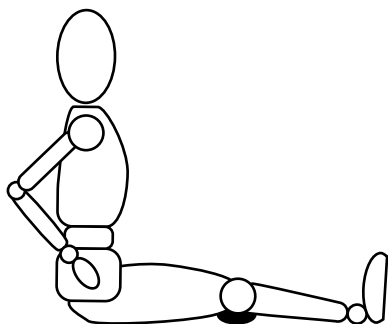
The exercises:

We suggest that the following exercises are held for 5 seconds and repeated 10 times each.

1. Sitting or lying down practice bending your knee by sliding your heel towards your bottom.



2. Sit on the floor with your legs out straight. Place a folded towel under your injured knee. Press the back of your knee into the towel as hard as possible. Keep your toes pulled up towards your body.



Further information

You may find the information on 'Sprains and Strains' on the NHS website helpful:

www.nhs.uk/conditions