

Acute knee injury

Information and exercise sheet



What is an acute knee injury?

Knee injuries often occur after sudden trauma, including falls, sports, impacts or twisting. They can range from mild sprains and strains to severe tears. Pain, swelling, and bruising are common, as well as difficulty walking.

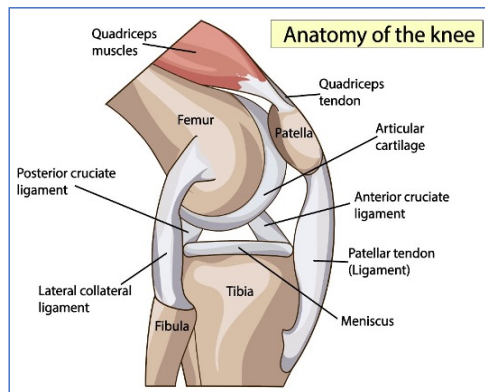


Image: healthshare.org.uk

Some injuries may require a review by an orthopaedic or fracture clinic for further treatment guidance.

- **Bones:** x-rays are used to look for fractures or breaks in the bone.
- **Muscle injuries:** known as 'muscle tears' or 'sprains', can occur from overloading.
- **Tendons:** connect muscles to bones and can be damaged by too much load, leading to a strain or rupture.
- **Ligaments:** are fibrous bands connecting bones to other bones. They can be overstretched, causing a sprain or partial or complete tear. The knee is supported by internal cruciate and collateral joint ligaments.
- **Meniscus:** are made of cartilage and are the shock absorbers inside the knee joint. They can become strained or torn from injury or become painful due to age-related changes.

What to expect

- Most people fully recover in 1–8 weeks, but this can vary based on your age, overall health, and the severity of the injury. Swelling and bruising can usually take a few weeks to reduce.
- Immediately after injury, pain and swelling can make it difficult to fully assess the soft tissues of the knee. Follow up assessment or imaging may be recommended.
- Severe injuries may require surgery. It is important to attend follow up appointments to support your recovery.

What can you do to help your recovery?

It is normal to have swelling and bruising to your injured knee. This can take a few weeks to reduce.

✓ DO R.I.C.E

To help with your recovery it is best to follow the 'RICE' principle. Do this over the **first 3-7 days**.

- **Rest:** avoid activities that significantly increase your pain.
- **Ice:** cooling an injury helps to reduce both pain and swelling. Apply ice to the injury for 20 minutes every 2 hours when awake. Wrap ice or a cold pack in a tea towel to protect your skin and remove it if it is too cold, to prevent ice burn.
- **Compression:** apply with tubigrip, a wrap bandage or compression stocking. Ensure the bandage does not increase pain or restrict blood flow. Monitor for new colour changes, discolouration of the toes, new pins and needles and numbness.
- **Elevate:** your knee as much as possible during the day.

✗ AVOID H.A.R.M

To help with your recovery avoid 'HARM' for the **first 7 days**.

- **Heat:** increases blood flow and swelling to the knee.
- **Alcohol:** increases blood flow and swelling. You may also be more likely to reinjure the knee.
- **Re-Injury:** protect your knee until it heals adequately. Avoid sports until advised by a health professional.
- **Massage:** can slow the healing if it is started too early.

You may be fitted with a knee brace and given crutches to help you rest and protect your knee. Your health professional may advise you of how much body weight you are allowed to put through the injured leg and when to remove or wear your brace.

Pain management

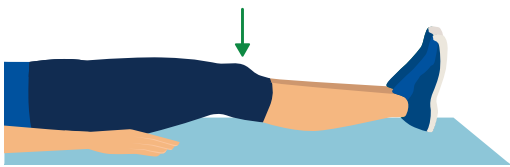
Pain relieving medicine may also be recommended in the early phases of recovery. Ask your health professional for further advice.

Exercises

- Keep the other joints (hip and ankle) moving freely.
- As the pain settles down after the first few days, gradually increase your level of activity.
- Unless otherwise advised, it is important to try and move and straighten your knee as normal. At first, it may feel stiff and painful but maintaining your movement is important.
- Follow any specific guidelines from the health professional regarding your splint and crutches and take care when exercising or walking on uneven or slippery ground.

Static quadriceps

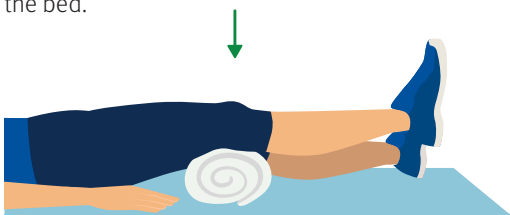
With your leg out straight, tighten the muscles at the front of your thigh by pushing your knee down into the bed.



Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.
_____ times a day.

Inner range quadriceps

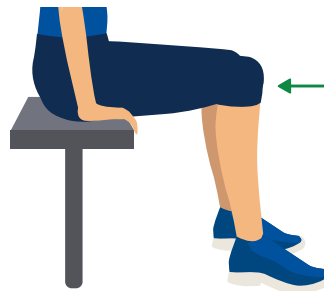
Place a towel roll under your knee with your leg out straight. Tighten the muscles at the front of your thigh as you push the back of the knee into the towel. Lift your foot up and off the bed.



Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.
_____ times a day.

Knee bending in sitting

Bend your knee by sliding your heel along the floor as far as you can. Stop when you can't get any further without significant increased pain.



Hold _____ seconds. Repeat _____ times.
_____ times a day.

Follow up

It is important to attend recommended follow up appointments to guide your healing and recovery.

These appointments may include:

- General Practitioner (GP or doctor)
- Orthopaedic or fracture clinic
- Outpatient hospital physiotherapy
- Private practice physiotherapist.

Seeking help

Please see a health care professional or attend your nearest emergency department if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- neurovascular concerns - constant tingling and numbness, changes of colour to the leg, worsening and unmanageable pain
- signs of infection - redness, heat, swollen, fevers, unwell.

For other general medical problems see your local doctor or healthcare professional. **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call. In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).