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Best Bet Exercises for Osteoarthritis of the Knee

Knee arthritis can be painful and debilitating. For osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee, self-care early on can often help significantly. It is important to stretch and strengthen the surrounding leg muscles to provide more support and reduce stresses around the joint. The following Best Bet Exercises will help you get started on your path to feeling stronger, more flexible and more active. Remember: Exercise should not be painful – if you experience pain, discontinue and consult with us.

How do you strengthen thigh muscles when you have arthritic knees?

Quadriceps Setting exercise helps to strengthen the quadriceps muscle (the big muscle on the front of the thigh), an important stabilizer of the knee.



1. Lie on your back with the leg you want to exercise straight. Place a small rolled towel underneath the knee.
2. Slowly tighten the muscle on top of the thigh (quadriceps) and push the back of the knee down into the rolled towel. Hold contraction for 5 seconds and then slowly release, resting 5 seconds between each contraction.
3. *Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions, 1 time daily.*

Straight Leg Raise also helps to strengthen the quadriceps muscle.



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1. Lie on your back with the leg you want to exercise straight. The other knee should be bent to support your lower back.
2. Tighten the muscle on the top of your thigh and lift to the level of your other knee. Slowly lower.
3. *Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions, 1 time daily.*

How can you improve the range of motion of your knee?

When you have knee OA, the hamstring muscles (the muscles that run along the back of your thigh to your knee) tend to get tight. **Hamstring Stretch** helps to stretch the hamstring muscles, improving the range of motion of your knee and helping you feel more flexible.



1. Lie on your back with the leg to be stretched straight with a strap around the bottom of your foot.



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2. Using the strap for support, elevate your leg until you feel a gentle stretch at the back of your knee and thigh. Hold for up to 30 seconds. Slowly lower.
3. *Perform 3 repetitions, 1 time daily.*

How do I improve my stability?

Gluteus Strengthening exercise will help you strengthen the gluteus muscles (the large muscles at the back of your hip), aiding in trunk control, leg stability and balance while you stand and walk.



1. Lie on your stomach with hips over a pillow to support your back.
2. Keeping the leg to be exercised straight, squeeze your buttocks and lift the leg slightly off the bed. Slowly lower.
3. *Perform 3 sets of 10 repetitions, 1 time daily.*

Calf Stretch exercise will help your lower leg and ankle stay flexible, helping to improve your balance and the way you walk.



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1. Stand facing a wall with the leg to be stretched behind you and the other leg in front. Place your hands or forearms on the wall for support.
2. Slowly bend the front knee, keeping the heel of the leg behind you down on the floor. Once you feel a stretch in you calf muscle at the back of your ankle, hold for 30 seconds. Slowly relax.
3. *Perform 3 repetitions, 1 time daily.*

