REBALANCEMD

Acute Knee Injuries

A Guide to Early Recovery

About Your Injury

Knee injuries are common. A sudden (acute) injury can happen from awkward landings, twisting movements, abnormal bending, falls or direct blows to the knee. Pain, bruising, or swelling may appear within minutes of the injury, or may not develop until later that day or the next day.

Injured knee structures can include ligaments, cartilage, meniscal tissue, tendons or bone. Knee pain can also be related to overuse injuries like tendonitis and bursitis, or a flare up of arthritis.

Protecting Your Knee

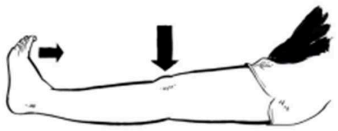
- Use a cane, crutches, a walker, or a brace to protect the knee if it is very sore.
- If you are using a cane or a single crutch, use it on the side opposite your injured knee.
- If there is no fracture (broken bone) around the knee, you may safely put weight on your leg as you tolerate. This may be uncomfortable, but it will not damage the knee.

Rest First, Then Begin Gentle Movement

For the first couple of days after your injury, rest your knee and avoid excessive walking or movements that provoke pain. You should begin gentle range of motion exercises to get the knee straight (extension) and bent (flexion) as soon as possible. Regaining full motion is one of the most important parts of recovery. A pillow behind the can be used occasionally for comfort but avoid using a pillow behind the knee when possible. Using a pillow all the time leads to stiffness in the knee. Range-of-motion exercises may cause some discomfort, but they will not damage the knee.

Knee Push Downs

Pull your ankle towards you and push your knees against the bed or floor by tensing your thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds before relaxing, Repeat 10-15 times.



Active Knee Flexion

Resting on your bed or sitting in a chair, bend the affected leg as far as possible, hold for a 5 seconds and relax. Complete 10-15 times.



Recovery Strategies

Ice & Elevation

Apply ice for 10–20 minutes at a time, as often as every 2–3 hours, to help control pain and swelling. Wrap ice in a cloth or towel to protect your skin. At the same time, raise your knee and foot above the level of your heart to help control swelling.

Compression & Bracing

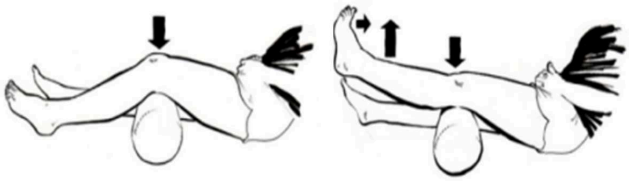
Use a compression bandage (e.g. Tensor bandage) by wrapping from above the ankle, around the knee and then up towards the hip. A compression brace such as a Reparel Sleeve or Bauerfeind Genutrain knee brace can also help control swelling. If the knee feels unstable, your doctor may recommend a hinged rehab brace or a Genutrain S brace. Ask your care team or visit The Shop at RebalanceMD for a recommendation suited to your injury.

Exercises for Strength

Begin exercises to keep the strength in the leg a few days after the injury. These may cause some discomfort initially, but they will not damage the knee.

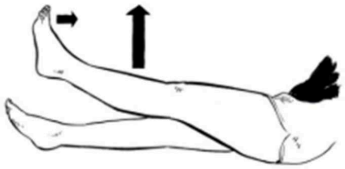
Quadriceps Strengthening

Lying on your back, place a firm cushion or rolled up towel under your affected leg. Lift the lower part of your leg so that your heel lifts off the bed. Hold for 5 seconds before relaxing, Repeat 10-15 times.



Straight Leg Raise

Straighten your affected leg and pull your toes towards you and lift your leg to about 15 cm above the bed, hold for 2 seconds before relaxing. Repeat 10-15 times.



Gait

Try to walk as normally as possible and avoid limping. As your knee recovers, gradually increase your walking, but avoid activities that make your knee pain or swelling worse. Regaining motion, strength, and using a walking aid such as crutches or a cane when needed, will help protect your knee while you recover.

Pain Control

Over-the-counter medications can help control pain:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be used up to 4 times a day for pain.
- Anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen (Advil) or naproxen (Aleve) may be added, if you do not have a history of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, kidney problems, or stomach ulcers.
- Topical diclofenac gel (Voltaren) may also be helpful if you prefer a topical option.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure whether these medications are right for you.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is very helpful for recovering from a knee injury and can begin a few days after your injury. Contact a physiotherapy clinic near you to book an assessment — your physiotherapist will guide you through a program tailored to your specific injury and recovery.