

RECOVERY

Knee Arthroscopy Exercise Guide

Regular exercise to restore strength and mobility to your knee is important for your full recovery after arthroscopic surgery. Your orthopaedic surgeon or physical therapist may recommend that you exercise for approximately 20 to 30 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day. They may suggest some of the exercises shown below. They may also advise you to engage in a walking program.

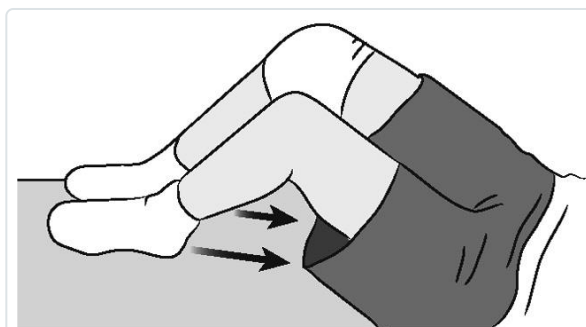
This guide can help you better understand your exercise or activity program, supervised by your orthopaedic surgeon or physical therapist. To ensure your safe recovery, be sure to check with your therapist or surgeon before performing any of the exercises or activities shown.

Initial Exercise Program

Hamstring Contraction

No movement should occur in this exercise. Lie or sit with your knees bent to about 10 degrees. Pull your heels into the floor, tightening the muscles on the back of your thigh. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat 10 times.

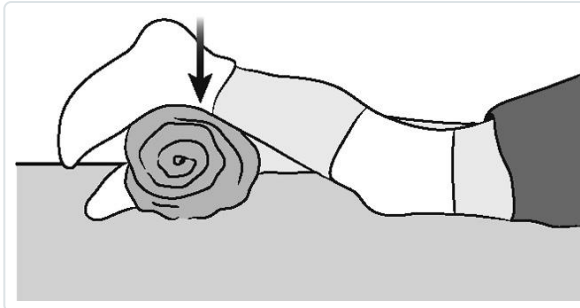


Hamstring contraction

Quadriceps Contraction

Lie on stomach with a towel roll under the ankle of your involved knee. Push ankle down into the towel roll. Your leg should straighten as much as possible. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat 10 times.

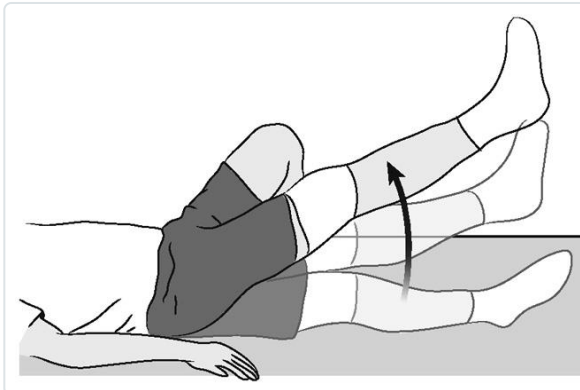
**Quadriceps contraction**

Straight Leg Raises

Lie on your back, with your uninvolved knee bent. Straighten your involved knee. Slowly lift leg about 6 inches, then hold for 5 seconds. Continue lifting in 6-inch increments, holding each time. Reverse the procedure, and return to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times.

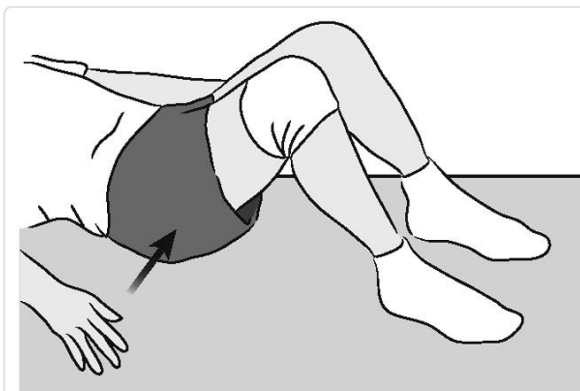
Advanced: Before starting, add weights to your ankle, starting with 1 pound of weight and building up to a maximum of 5 pounds of weight over 4 weeks.

**Straight leg raises**

Buttock Tucks

While lying down on your back, tighten your buttock muscles. Hold tightly for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat 10 times.

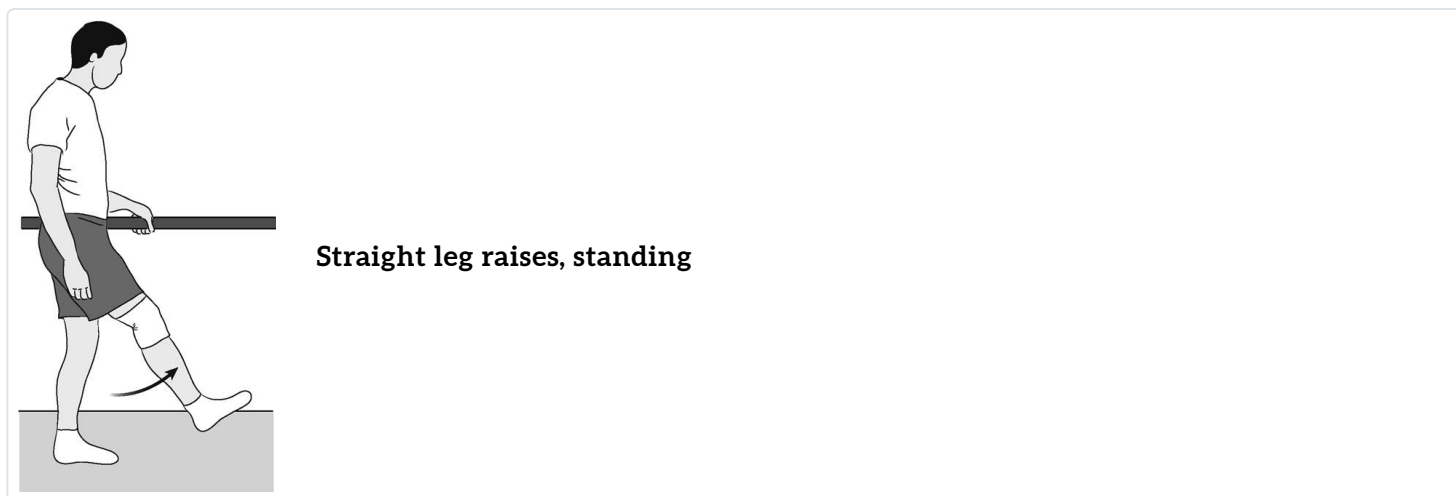
**Buttock tucks**

Straight Leg Raises, Standing

Support yourself, if necessary, and slowly lift your involved leg forward keeping your knee straight. Return to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times.

Advanced: Before starting, add weights to your ankle, starting with 1 pound of weight and building up to a maximum of 5 pounds of weight over 4 weeks.



Intermediate Exercise Program

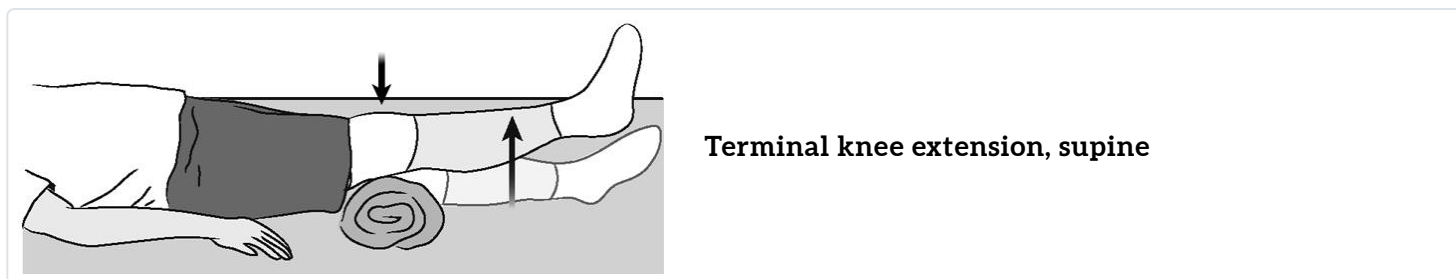
Terminal Knee Extension, Supine

Lie on your back with a towel roll under your knee.

Straighten your knee (still supported by the roll) and hold for 5 seconds. Slowly return to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times.

Advanced: Before starting, add weights to your ankle, starting with 1 pound of weight and building up to a maximum of 5 pounds of weight over 4 weeks.



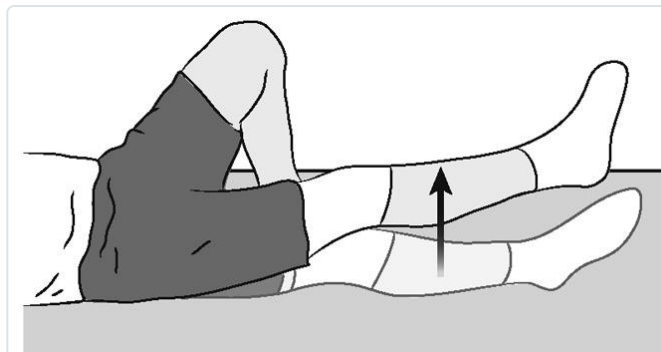
Straight Leg Raises

Lie on your back, with your uninjured knee bent. Straighten your other knee with a quadriceps muscle contraction.

Now, slowly raise your leg until your foot is about 12 inches from the floor. Slowly lower it to the floor and relax.

Perform 5 sets of 10 repetitions.

Advanced: Before starting, add weights to your ankle, starting with 1 pound of weight and building up to a maximum of 5 pounds of weight over 4 weeks.



Straight leg raises

Partial Squat, with Chair

Hold onto a sturdy chair or counter with your feet 6-12 inches from the chair or counter. While keeping your back straight, slowly bend your knees. DO NOT go any lower than 90 degrees. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Slowly come back up. Relax.

Repeat 10 times.

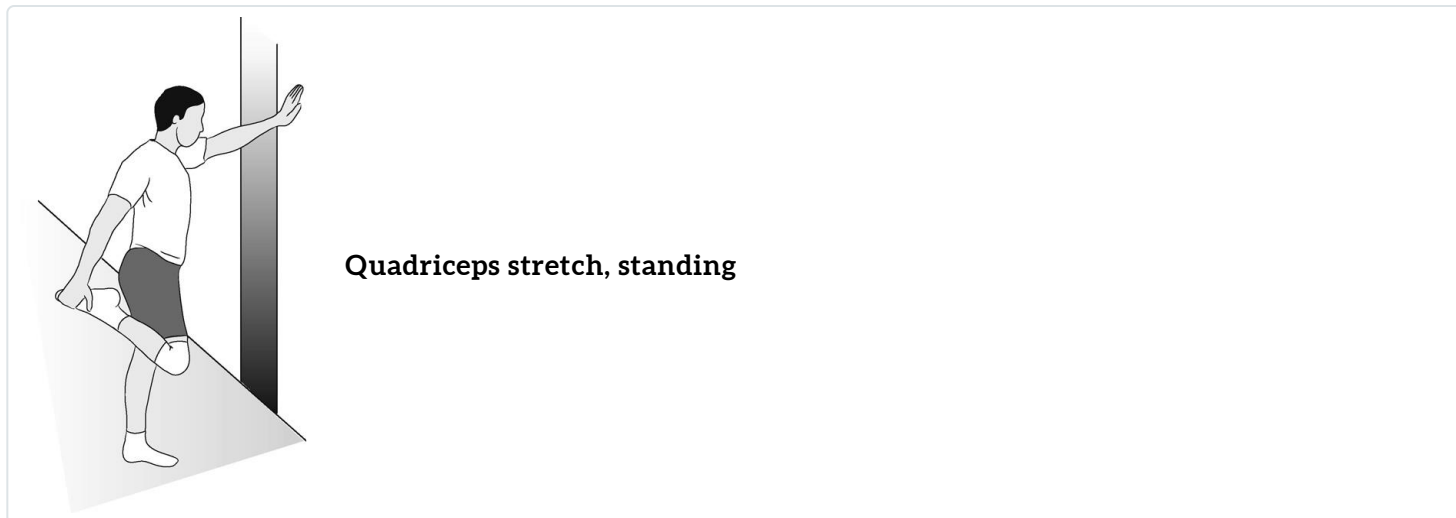


Partial squat, with chair

Quadriceps Stretch, Standing

Standing with your involved knee bent, gently pull heel toward buttocks, feeling a stretch in the front of the leg. Hold for 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times.

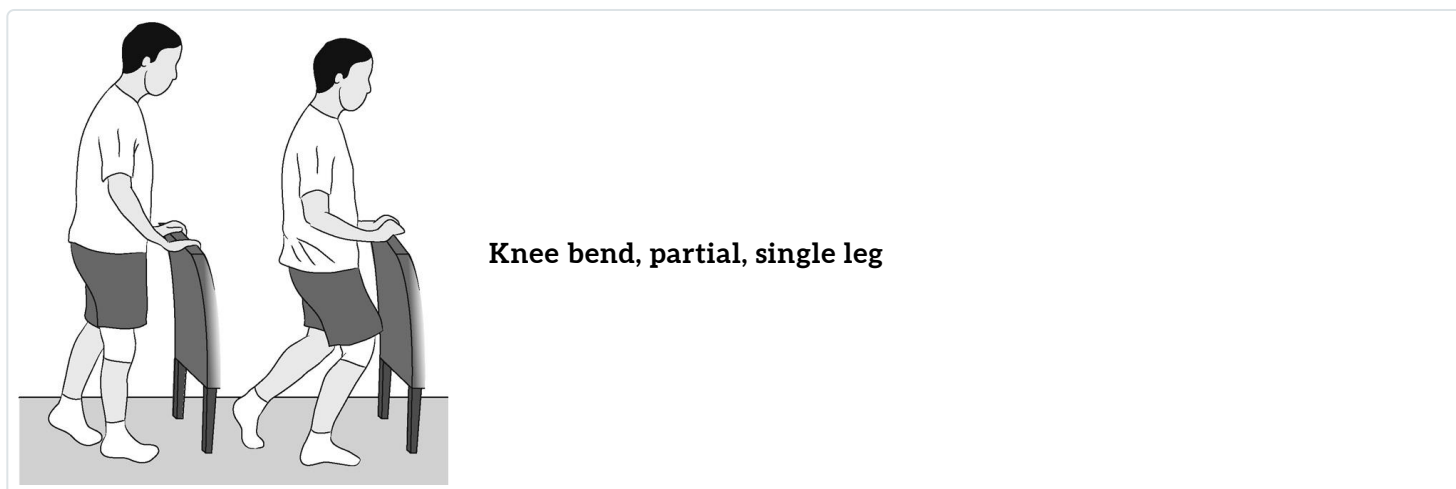


Advanced Exercise Program

Knee Bend, Partial, Single Leg

Stand supporting yourself with the back of a chair. Bend your uninvolved leg with your toe touching for balance as necessary. Slowly lower yourself, keeping your foot flat. Do not overdo this exercise. Straighten up to the starting position. Relax.

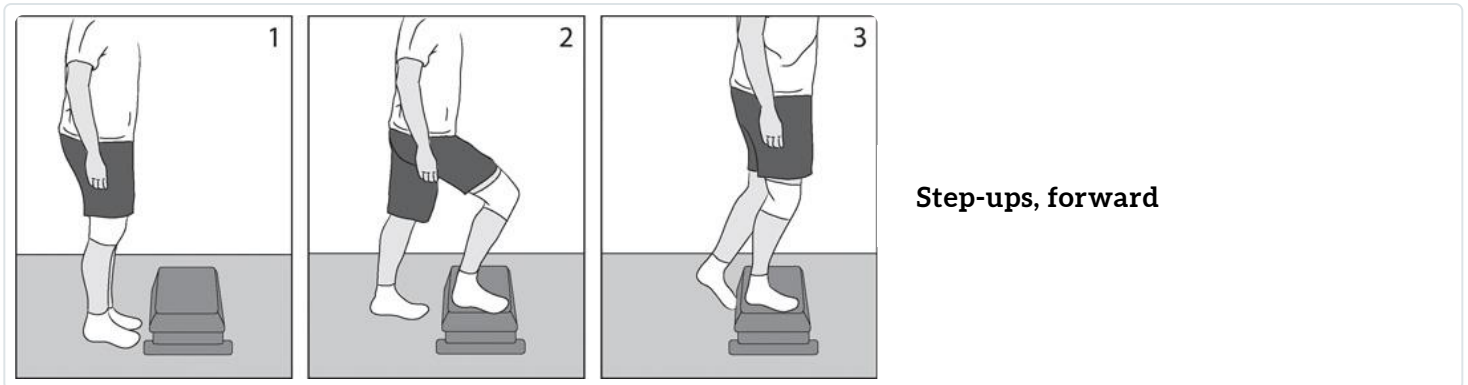
Repeat 10 times.



Step-ups, Forward

Step forward up onto a 6-inch high footstool or platform, leading with your involved leg. Step down, returning to the starting position. Increase the height of the platform as strength increases.

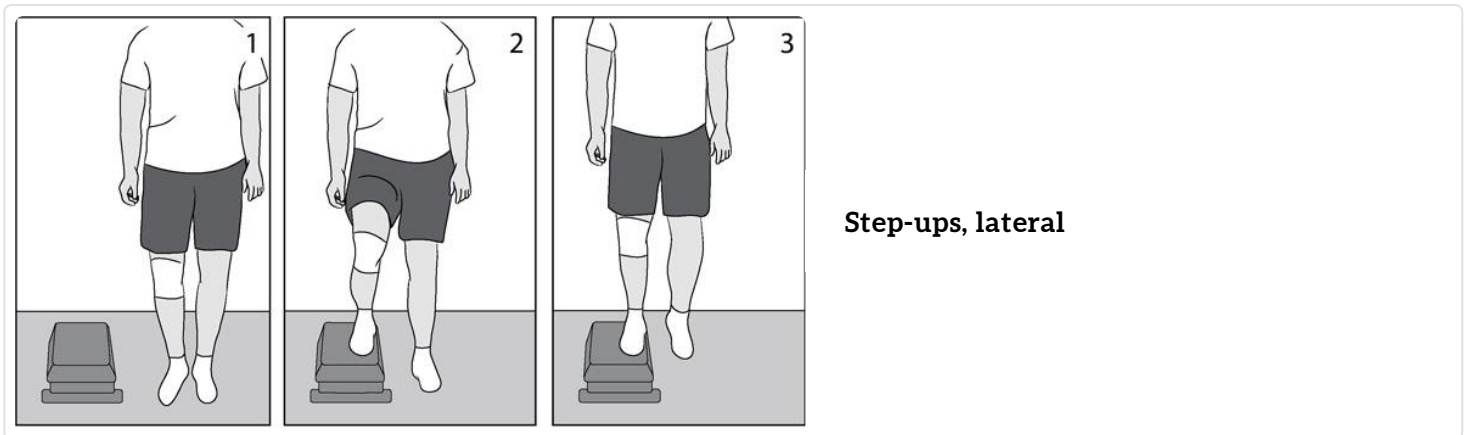
Repeat 10 times.



Step-ups, Lateral

Step up onto a 6-inch high footstool or platform, leading with your involved leg. Step down, returning to the starting position. Increase the height of the platform as strength increases.

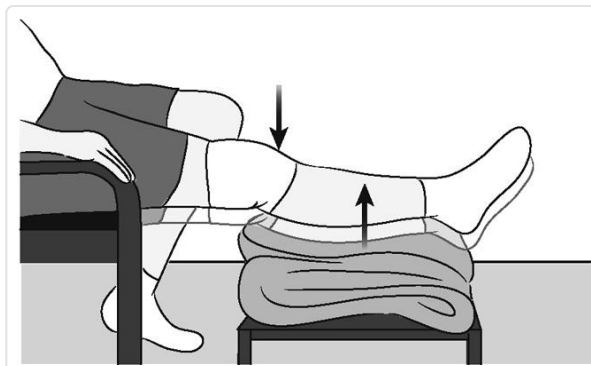
Repeat 10 times.



Terminal Knee Extension, Sitting

While sitting in a chair, support your involved heel on a stool. Now straighten your knee, hold for 5 seconds, then slowly return to the starting position.

Repeat 10 times.



Terminal knee extension, sitting

Hamstring Stretch, Supine

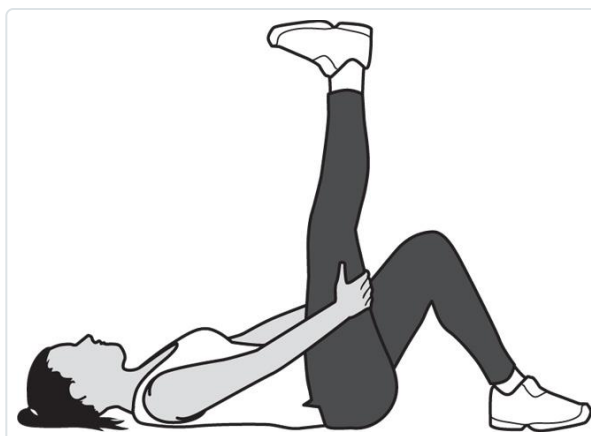
Lie on your back. Bend your hip, grasping your thigh just above the knee. Slowly straighten your knee until you feel the tightness behind your knee. Hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat 10 times.

Repeat with the other leg.

If you do not feel this stretch, bend your hip a little more, and repeat.

No bouncing! Maintain a steady, prolonged stretch for the maximum benefit.



Hamstring stretch, supine

Hamstring Stretch, Supine at Wall

Lie next to a doorway with one leg extended. Place your heel against the wall. The closer you are to the wall, the more intense the stretch.

With your knee bent, move your hips toward the wall. Now begin to straighten your knee. When you feel the tightness behind your knee, hold for 5 seconds, then relax.

Repeat 10 times.

Repeat with the other leg.



Hamstring stretch, supine at wall

Exercise Bike

If you have access to an exercise bike, adjust the seat height so that the bottom of your foot just touches the pedal and complete a full revolution. As you become stronger, slowly increase the tension on the bike.

Start pedaling for 10 minutes a day. Increase the duration by one minute a day until you are pedaling for 20 minutes a day.

Walking

Walking is an excellent physical exercise activity for the middle stages of your recovery from surgery (after 2 weeks).

Running

Your doctor may recommend that you avoid running activities for a period of time after surgery in order to protect your knee. The length of the restriction will depend upon what type of procedure you had. For example, if you had an ACL reconstruction or meniscal repair, your running restriction will be different than if you had torn cartilage removed. Your doctor will talk with you about when it is safe to gradually resume your running activities.



Pain or Swelling after Exercise

As you increase the intensity of your exercise program, you may experience temporary setbacks. If your knee swells or hurts after a particular exercise activity, you should lessen or stop the activity until you feel better.

You should then Rest, Ice, Compress (with an elastic bandage), and Elevate your knee (R.I.C.E.). Contact your orthopaedic surgeon if your symptoms persist.

Last Reviewed

February 2017

Contributed and/or Updated by[Rick Wilkerson, DO](#)**Peer-Reviewed by**[Stuart J. Fischer, MD](#)

AAOS does not endorse any treatments, procedures, products, or physicians referenced herein. This information is provided as an educational service and is not intended to serve as medical advice. Anyone seeking specific orthopaedic advice or assistance should consult his or her orthopaedic surgeon, or locate one in your area through the AAOS [Find an Orthopaedist](#) program on this website.