



WHAT IS A KNEE SPRAIN?

A knee sprain is an injury to one or more of the ligaments of the knee. The knee has four major ligaments: anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), posterior cruciate ligament (PCL), medial collateral ligament (MCL), and lateral collateral ligament (LCL). Your Doctor or Physiotherapist will let you know which ligament you have injured.

Knee sprains are based on a grading system:

- Grade I (mild): the injured ligament is stretched.
- Grade II (moderate): the injured ligament is partially torn.
- Grade III (severe): the injured ligament is completely torn.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO RECOVER?

Knee sprains are very common. The length of time it takes to heal depends on the ligament injured and the severity of the sprain. Some lower grade sprains may heal within six weeks, whereas more severe sprains could take up to six months to heal.

OPTIMAL RECOVERY PLAN

TIME SINCE INJURY

0-2 WEEKS

- Rest and elevate your leg throughout the day.
- Apply ice to the injured area for 10-15 minutes, every 3-4 hours. Allow skin temperature to return to normal before reapplication of ice. Protect your skin by wrapping an ice pack or frozen peas in a damp towel to ensure the ice is never in direct contact with your skin.
- Consider using a knee sleeve or tensor to compress the knee, which should help to decrease swelling and provide stability.
- Follow pain relief advice given by the Doctor you saw in the hospital, or ~~or~~ consult your Pharmacist or Family Physician.

2-6 WEEKS

- Gradually wean yourself from wearing the brace.
- Start the exercises listed on the next page.

6 WEEKS ONWARD

- By now you should be returning to your normal level of activities. You might still feel some discomfort with higher level activities such as running.
- If you experience a significant increase in pain and/or swelling then reduce your activity levels and gradually increase the level of activity over a longer period of time.

HOME EXERCISE PROGRAM

Early movement of your knee is important to promote circulation and reduce stiffness. A list of exercises is provided below. You should do these daily to help with healing and so that your knee does not become stiff.

Note: The number of times you need to perform each exercise is included as a guide only. If you experience a significant amount of pain doing a certain exercise, you should reduce the number of times you do that exercise and gradually increase the amount during your recovery.

EXERCISES

Repeat each exercise 10 times, 3 times a day.

1. Range of motion: position yourself in lying or long sitting. Gently slide your heel towards your bottom, bending your knee.



2. Straight leg raise: Lie on your back, with your injured leg straight and your other knee bent. Pull your toes toward you (to activate your quad muscle on the front of your thigh). Keeping your injured leg/knee straight, lift your leg one inch off the ground.



3. Single leg balancing: stand near a counter or stable surface. Keeping your hips stable, slowly transfer your weight to one foot, lifting the other foot off the ground. Balance in a still position for as long as able, up to one minute. Repeat on other side.
4. Wall squats: Lean against a wall. Walk your feet out away from you, about 1.5 feet from wall. Slowly slide your back partially down the wall until you are in a mini-squat position. Your knees should remain in line with your toes and should not go beyond your toes. Sit in this position for 10-30 seconds, as able.



For further advice and recommendations on exercises, please consult a Physiotherapist in your community. If you need a referral for Physiotherapy, please ask your Family Physician.

Return to Sport

You should be able to squat, jump and run without pain before you return to sport. It is recommended that you see a Physiotherapist in your community prior to returning to any sport.

Return to Driving

You should be able to perform a full emergency stop confidently and without pain before you consider returning to driving.