

Best moves for strong knees

Knee problems can interfere with daily activities for people of all ages. An injury can sideline you from sports and exercise, or even make walking a challenge. **Here are some simple tips on building and maintaining strong knees.**

1 Strengthen the muscles that support your knees. Strong muscles protect joints and enable knees to work in optimal form. Walking up stairs, riding a stationary bicycle, doing squats or working out with weights are all ways to strengthen the leg muscles. You will also want to keep those muscles as flexible as possible with the use of good stretching and range-of-motion exercises.

2 Avoid injuries and overuse. Torn ligaments and tendons contribute to knee problems. A common injury experienced for athletes is the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) tear. A sudden, twisting motion of the knee, such as soccer or basketball moves, can injure the ACL. Activities such as long-distance running or heavy lifting may cause overuse and knee injuries. Try to avoid activities causing knee pain and always seek medical attention for injuries.

3 Manage underlying conditions. Osteoarthritis is the most common disease affecting the knee's ability to perform. As cartilage in the knee gradually wears away, severe pain and swelling can occur. This is especially true as one gets older. Other conditions impacting knees could include rheumatoid arthritis. Team up with your doctor to manage your condition and follow the recommended plan for medication, rest, ice, heat, elevation, etc.

4 Stay active. Exercising is good for your knees. Just be sure to warm up before you begin your activity and stretch after you're warmed up and when you finish. Participation in weight-bearing activities such as walking, running, dancing and climbing stairs helps build bone strength. Seek to maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight puts extra pressure on the knees.

Exercises for Knee Pain

Even if you are already experiencing knee pain, exercising and strengthening the muscles surrounding the knee joints—Quadriceps (front of thigh), Hamstrings (back of thigh), Abductor (outside thigh), and Adductor (inside thigh)—will help make your knees stronger and less susceptible to injury.



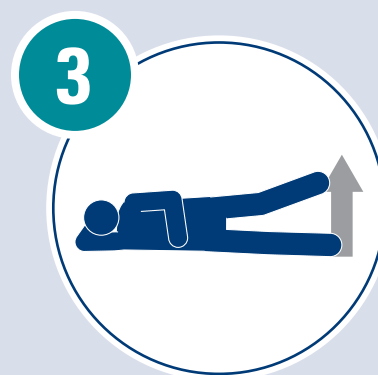
Prone Quad Stretch

Locate a stable bed or table and lay on your stomach, keeping one foot on the ground, knee bent, and the other leg extended along the edge. Bring your heel to your hip using your hand or a non-elastic strap/ belt at home until a stretch in the front of the thigh is felt. **Hold for 30 seconds, two times each leg.**



Correct Sit to Stand

Start sitting on the edge of a chair with tall posture. With your feet shoulder width apart, shift your body weight forward onto both feet as you engage the hips and stand up tall keeping tall posture. **Repeat ten times.**



Hip Side Leg Raise

Either on the ground or a firm bed, lay on the side of the body with the legs slightly in front of the torso. Keeping the core engaged raise the top leg about 6-10 inches up toward the sky, leading with the heel. **Repeat ten times each leg.**