

# Exercises to help you Deal with Knee Pain - WebMD

There are many things you can do to help knee pain, whether it's due to a recent injury or arthritis you've had for years.

**Don't rest too much.** Too much rest can weaken your muscles, which can worsen joint pain. Find an exercise program that is safe for your knees and stick with it. If you're not sure which motions are safe or how much you can do, talk with your doctor or a physical therapist.

**Do exercise.** Cardio exercises strengthen the muscles that support your knee and increase flexibility. Weight training and stretching do, too. For cardio, some good choices include walking, swimming and water aerobics, stationary cycling and elliptical machines. Tai chi may also help ease stiffness and improve balance.

**Don't risk a fall.** A painful or unstable knee can make a fall more likely, which can cause further knee damage. Curb your risk of falling by making sure your home is well lit, using handrails on staircases, and using a sturdy ladder or foot stool if you need to reach something from a high shelf.

**Do use "RICE."** Rest, ice, compression, and elevation (RICE) is good for knee pain caused by a minor injury or an arthritis flare. Give your knee some rest, apply ice to reduce swelling, wear a compressive bandage, and keep your knee elevated.

**Don't overlook your weight. If you're overweight, losing weight reduces the stress on your knee. You don't even need to get to your "ideal" weight. Smaller changes still make a difference.**

***Please consult with your doctor before trying anything new. If you feel ANY discomfort performing any of these exercises, discontinue immediately and consult with your doctor for an alternate exercise.***

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## Hamstring Stretch

Stretching improves range of motion and keeps you limber.

To get the most out of your stretches, warm up first with a 5-minute walk. To stretch, lie down. Loop a bed sheet around your right foot. Use the sheet to help pull the straight leg up and stretch it. Hold for 20 seconds, then lower the leg. Repeat twice. Then, switch legs.

## Calf Stretch

Stretching exercises also help prevent pain and injury.

To do a calf stretch, hold onto a chair for balance. Bend your right leg. Step back with your left leg, and slowly straighten it behind you. Press your left heel toward the floor. You should feel the stretch in the calf of your back leg. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat twice, then switch legs.

For more of a stretch: Lean forward, bending the right knee deeper. Don't let the right knee go past your toes.

## Seated Hip March

Strengthen your hips and thigh muscles. It can help with daily activities like walking or rising from a chair.

Sit up straight in a chair. Kick your left foot back slightly, but keep your toes on the floor. Lift your right foot off the floor, knee bent. Hold the right leg in the air 3 seconds. Slowly lower your foot to the ground. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Too hard? Use your hands to help lift your leg.

### **Pillow Squeeze**

This move helps strengthen the inside of your legs to better support your knees. Lie on your back, both knees bent. Place a pillow between the knees.

Squeeze your knees together, squishing the pillow between them. Hold for 5 seconds. Relax. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Too hard? You can also do this exercise while seated.

### **Heel Raise**

Stand tall and hold the back of a chair for support. Lift your heels off the ground and rise up on the toes of both feet. Hold for 3 seconds. Slowly lower both heels to the ground. Do two sets of 10 repetitions.

Too hard? Do the same exercise while sitting in a chair.

### **Side Leg Raise**

Stand and hold the back of a chair for balance. Place your weight on your left leg. Stand tall and lift the right leg out to the side -- keep the right leg straight and outer leg muscles tensed. Hold 3 seconds, then slowly lower the right leg. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

Too hard? Increase leg height over time. After a few workouts, you'll be able to raise your leg higher.

### **Sit to Stand**

Practice this move to make standing easier. Place two pillows on a chair. Sit on top, with your back straight, feet flat on the floor (see left photo). Use your leg muscles to slowly and smoothly stand up tall. Then slowly lower again to sit. Be sure your bent knees don't move forward of your toes. Try with your arms crossed or loose at your sides.

Too hard? Add pillows. Or use a chair with armrests and help push up with your arms.

### **Step Ups**

Do this to strengthen your legs for climbing stairs.

Stand in front of stairs and, holding onto the banister for balance, place your left foot on a step. Tighten your left thigh muscle and step up, touching your right foot onto the step. Keep your muscles tight as you slowly lower your right foot. Touch the floor and lift again. Do two sets of 10 repetitions. Switch legs after each set.

### **Walking**

Even if you have stiff or sore knees, walking may be a great exercise. Start slow and keep at it. Walking can ease joint pain, strengthen leg muscles, improve posture (stand tall when you walk), and improve flexibility. It's also good for your heart.

If you're not active, check in with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.

### **Low-Impact Activities**

Other exercises that are easy on the knees include biking, swimming, and water aerobics. Water exercise takes weight off painful joints. Many community and hospital wellness centers, gyms, and pools offer classes for people with arthritis.

Being active may also help you lose weight, which takes pressure off joints.

For favorite activities, like golf, ask your doctor or physical therapist about how to modify painful moves.

### **How Much Exercise?**

Thirty minutes a day is a good goal. Start small, such as 10 minutes every other day. If you don't have pain, exercise more to meet the goal.

When you start to exercise, some mild muscle soreness is normal. It's OK to work through it. Check with your doctor if you want to try over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or naproxen to help the soreness. Ice can also help. Don't ignore pain in your joints, though. Contact your doctor if you have any.