

## Acute Knee Injuries

Please follow the advice in this leaflet in conjunction with that given by your attending healthcare professional. Take painkillers as advised or prescribed.

After an acute injury it is important to decrease pain and swelling and gradually return to normal movement. The first stage of inflammation can last up to 6 days, and this leaflet is designed to help you manage your symptoms effectively through this time using **PRICE**:

**Protection** - This may be applied by taping / bandaging / splinting and or the use of crutches. For a mild injury protect for up to 3 days, for a moderate injury up to 5 days and for a severe injury for as long as your healthcare professional had advised. It is important to remember not to immobilise the joint completely if possible.

**Rest** - Mild injuries should be rested for about 24 hours, moderate for 3-5 days, and severe for at least a week. This is a period of relative rest however, and although you need to limit walking, you still need to complete the exercises shown in this leaflet in a pain free range.

**Ice** - Apply over the entire affected area. Use crushed ice wrapped in a damp towel (ice in a plastic bag and frozen gel packs can also be used), but ensure that the ice does not touch the skin to avoid a burn. Use for 20-30 minutes (no longer) every 2 hours. If you have problems with sensation, then check the skin every 5 minutes.

**Compression** - If using a tubigrip this should reach 6cm above and below the knee and be worn for the first 3 days post-injury. Pressure should be equal throughout the bandage and you must check the circulation in your feet regularly when wearing it. Do not use when lying down or elevating the leg.

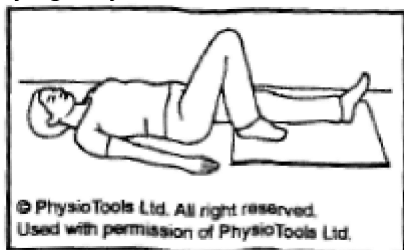
**Elevation** - Elevate the leg above the level of the heart as much as possible in the first 72 hours. Support it using pillows and do not use the compression bandage during this time.

### **Exercises**

After your period of rest, begin to perform the following exercises within the limits of the pain, little and often throughout the day (i.e. 5 repetitions every few hours).

#### **Exercise 1**

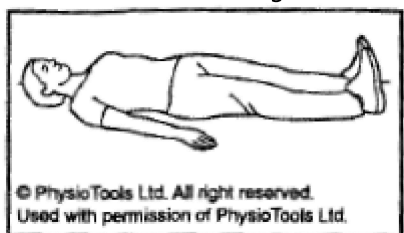
Lying on your back, bend and straighten your hip and knee by sliding your foot up and down.



#### **Exercise 2**

Lying on your back or sitting up with legs out straight, bend your ankles and push your knees down firmly against the bed. Hold for 5 seconds then relax.

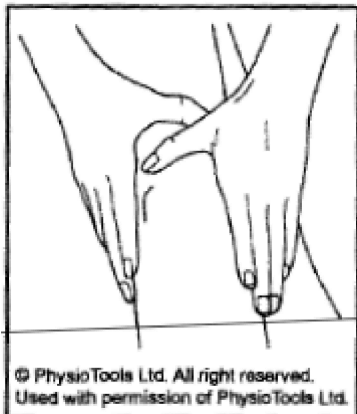
This exercise also strengthens the important muscles above the knee (*quads*).



#### **Exercise 3**

Sit with your leg straight.

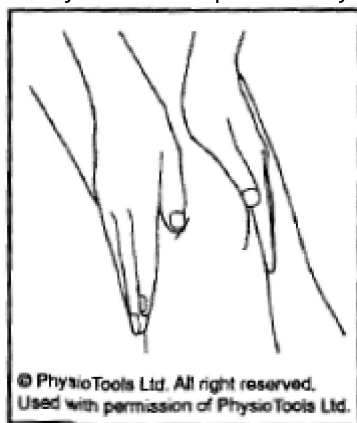
Push your knee cap outwards. Then return to start position.



#### Exercise 4

Sit with your leg straight.

Push your knee cap towards your opposite leg.



The knee cap exercises (3 and 4) help prevent stiffness of the front of the knee.

#### Crutch use

If you have been given crutches, put as much pressure as is comfortable through the affected leg, whilst trying to maintain a normal walking pattern.

**When going upstairs** place the 'good' leg on the step and bring the other one, and crutches, up to meet it.

**When going downstairs** place crutches and affected leg on the lower step and bring the 'good leg' down to meet it.

**If your symptoms are not improving within 3-4 days, please see your GP / contact 111 (or return to ED if worsening).**

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*Illustrations for exercise 1-4 used with the kind permission of PhysioTools Ltd.*

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