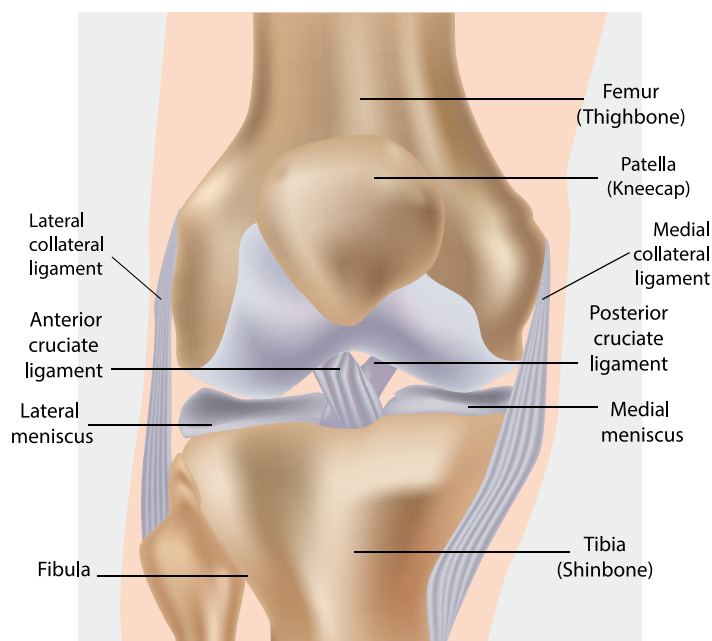


# Acute knee injuries



## The knee joint

The knee is made up of four bones: the thigh bone, knee cap, shin bone and fibula. The joint is supported by many soft tissues including ligaments, tendons and cartilage.

Common knee injuries include flare ups of arthritis and damage to the soft tissues that support your knee.

Injuries often occur following direct injury to the knee e.g. collision in sport or during a fall, or when a strong force is applied to the knee.

Pain, swelling and heat are the most common concerns people have after injuring their knee. This can make the knee stiff and sore.

## Role of the Emergency Department

- A doctor and or physiotherapist will assess your knee for bony and soft tissue injury
- Pain and swelling make it harder to perform an accurate assessment of the knee, especially straight after the injury
- If there is a lot of trauma or signs of serious injury you may need further tests.
- If there are no concerns of serious injury requiring immediate medical treatment, management involves pain relief, advice, and follow-up with your GP.

## Know the facts

- Most people with knee injuries recover in one to six weeks. Healing time is affected by your age, general health, and how bad the injury is.
- Pain relieving medication may be required. Talk to your doctor about the options.
- Follow-up with your GP or physiotherapist to get further assessment in the weeks following your injury. After the initial pain and swelling have improved, a more thorough assessment can be completed.
- A brace may be provided if there is an injury to the ligaments or tendons of the knee. However, it is important to remove the brace to complete exercises as directed by your doctor/ physiotherapist.
  - Wearing a brace, even for short periods, increases your risk of blood clots, stiffness and loss of strength in your knee.

## Management for knee injury

The most important treatment in the first 48-72 hours, is based on the **'RICE' principles**:

- **Relative Rest:** do not stop all activity. Instead avoid activities that cause a moderate increase in your pain. When walking ensure that you walk as normally as possible. If you are unable to put weight on your leg you may need crutches (we will assess if this is appropriate for you).
- **Ice:** apply ice (e.g. ice cubes, frozen peas or ice pack) wrapped in a damp cloth over the affected area for 15-20 minutes, every one to two hours during the day. Never place ice directly onto the skin.
- **Compression:** If you are given a bandage or support, wear it during the day. Take the support off at night. Continue wearing the support until the majority of the swelling has gone down.
- **Elevation:** when resting, raise your leg so it is above the level of your heart to help reduce swelling.

## Exercises

It is important to maintain movement and strength as you recover. Perform these exercises as instructed.

### Thigh muscle strengthening

Tighten the muscle on top of your knee by pushing the back of your knee down into the bed to straighten it.



Hold \_\_\_\_ seconds, repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

### Knee range of movement

In lying, bend your knee to slide your heel up towards your bottom as far as the pain allows. Slowly straighten your knee back down onto the bed.



Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

### Ankle pumps

Using your ankle only, pump up and down.



Repeat \_\_\_\_ times every 1-2 hours.

## When to seek further help

If after following the above instructions for approximately two weeks, you are unable to put weight through your leg and your knee remains painful and swollen with no improvement, please seek the advice from your GP.

### Seeking help:

- For other general medical problems see your local doctor or healthcare professional.
- 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and triage services to the public in all parts of Queensland. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call.
- In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).



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