



Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) reconstruction (inpatient exercises)

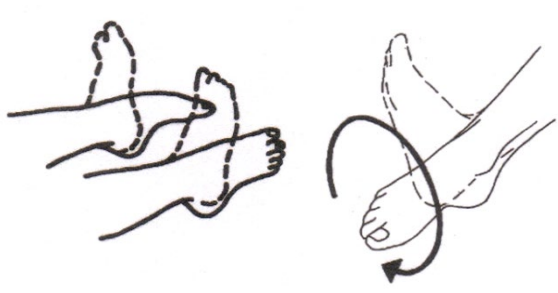
The following exercises apply to all anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) reconstruction surgeries performed at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. They aim to help you get back to full fitness as quickly as possible after your operation.

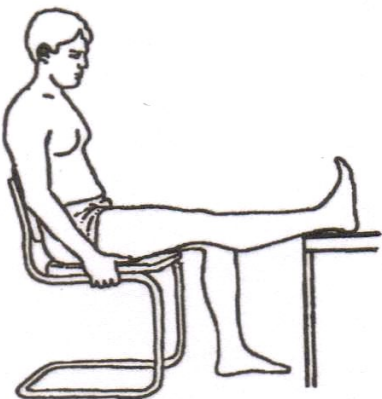
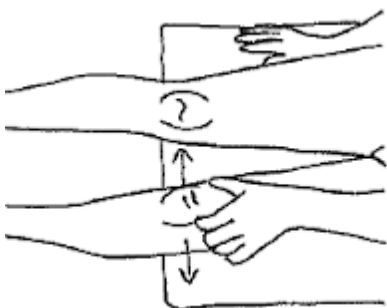
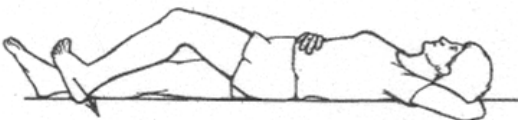
Immediately after surgery

On the day of the operation you will return to the ward with a cotton wool and crepe bandage on your knee. You may also have a hinged knee brace but this is only in cases where other surgery is performed alongside the ACL reconstruction and is not normally used when only the ACL is repaired.

Exercises

Start the following exercises on the day after your surgery and do them a minimum of 5 times each, 1-2 times a day with each leg. Your physiotherapist will help explain how to do them. If this results in no increase in your pain and swelling, you can increase the exercises to 10 times each, 3-4 times a day.

1. Circulatory exercises  © PhysioTools Ltd © PhysioTools Ltd	Point and bend your ankles. Circle your ankles in both directions. Do a minimum of 20 of each exercise.
2. Static quads 	Push your knee down into the bed as hard as you can by tightening the muscles on the front of your thigh. Hold for a count of ten, relax. Repeat 10 times.

3. Hyperextension 	Your physio will stretch your knee into full hyperextension (to match your good leg). When you go home this can be done for you by a responsible adult or you can rest your heel on a large book or the armrest of the sofa so that your knee is unsupported and let it relax into the same position.
4. Patella mobs 	Your physio will show you how to move your knee-cap to prevent it from becoming stiff. Or visit: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewsrnC2OTos
5. Straight leg raise 	Brace your knee as straight as possible, raise the leg with the knee straight about 6 inches off the bed. Hold for 5-10 seconds then lower gently to the bed. Repeat 10 times.
6. Heel slides 	Slide your heel up the bed so that your knee bends, hold for a few seconds and then slide it down again. Repeat 10 times. You will gradually be able to bend the knee further and further. It is important when you are bending your knee that your heel is in contact with something (at home the back of a tray with a little talc is a good idea as it cuts down on friction). You should not sit on the edge of the bed with your leg dangling.
7. Heel digs 	With your leg bent up in front of you dig your heel into the mattress as hard as you can. Hold for a count of 10. Relax, repeat 10 times.

Mobilising

You should be able to mobilise within a few hours of surgery dependent on how you are feeling and the strength of your straight leg raise. You will be given and taught the correct use of crutches. You must walk putting some weight through your operated leg, walking with the leg dangling or hopping can be detrimental to the graft causing it to become lax. However, where additional surgery has been performed such as a meniscal repair you may be advised not put any weight through your leg.

Discharge criteria

- Independently mobile with crutches on the flat and on stairs.
- Can do a full straight leg raise, (lift the leg off the bed with the knee straight).
- Full passive hyperextension (able to stretch the knee as shown in picture 3).
- Be able to do all of the exercises.

After leaving hospital, you will be referred for outpatient physiotherapy, where your exercises will be progressed.

Managing swelling

Your knee may well still be swollen and you can use an ice pack at home.

A small bag of frozen peas or sweetcorn or a gel pack wrapped in a damp tea towel can be used regularly throughout the day. It is best to leave the ice pack on no longer than 10 minutes. You can ice the knee multiple times throughout the day as long as you leave at least 20 minutes between each session. If you refreeze the peas or sweetcorn to use again, please do not eat them.

Contact us

If you have any enquiries about your outpatient physiotherapy, please contact the RBFT Physiotherapy Department 0118 322 7811 or 7812.

Please return any crutches, walking sticks or frames you were given by the hospital so they can be cleaned and reused for other patients.

Returned walking aids can be dropped off at:

- Orthopaedic Outpatients (Fracture Clinic), Level 2 South Block, RBH
- Physio East (opposite Craven Rd multi storey car park)
- Adjacent to main reception desk on Level 2 Main Entrance, Craven Rd
- Alternatively, you can return your walking aids when you attend your follow-up appointment at Orthopaedics Outpatients (Fracture Clinic)

Thank you for saving the NHS money and supporting the continued care of other patients.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Orthopaedic Physiotherapy, October 2025. Next review due: October 2027.