

The Knee Exercise Routine

What to do, how often, and the exact signals that mean stop for today.

CHECKED AGAINST TIER 1 GUIDANCE

MAYO CLINIC · NIAMS · CLEVELAND CLINIC

1 START WITH THE LOW IMPACT LIST, MOST WEEKS

- **Pick from:** stationary or recumbent bike, elliptical, water walking, ordinary walking.
- **Target:** 150 minutes a week of somewhat hard effort. Short bouts count the same.
- **Pace test:** breathing harder than usual, but you can still hold a conversation.

2 ADD TWO STRENGTH SESSIONS A WEEK

- **At least 2 days a week:** bands, hand weights, machines or your own body weight.
- **All major muscle groups,** not only the sore leg. Hips and trunk set the knee's load.
- **Range of motion daily:** 5 to 10 minutes, and most of it is safe every day.

3 RUN THE HEAT AND ICE CLOCK AROUND EVERY SESSION

- **Before:** warm towel, hot pack or warm shower, about 20 minutes. Warm, never hot.
- **Then:** 5 to 10 minutes of gentle range of motion before anything strenuous.
- **After:** ice for up to 20 minutes, and always if the joint is already swollen.

4 KNOW THE STOP SIGNALS, AND WHEN TO CALL

- **Stop today if:** pain turns sharp, or is worse than your usual joint pain.
- **Slow down for** swelling or a change in skin color around the joint.
- **Call a provider** if pain lasts more than a few days or changes your routine.

HELPS OR SKIP

Stationary bike	HELPS
Elliptical	HELPS
Water walking	HELPS
Walking	HELPS
Yoga or tai chi	HELPS
Too much too fast	SKIP

STOP THE SESSION IF

Pain turns sharp, pain is worse than your usual ache, or the joint swells or changes color.

BEYOND THE WORKOUT · YOUR WEEKLY NUMBERS, YOUR OPTIONS, YOUR WHY

YOUR WEEKLY TARGETS - circle what you can hit

WHAT	HOW MUCH	HOW OFTEN
Aerobic, low impact	150 min total	most days
Strength training	all major muscles	2+ days a week
Range of motion	5 to 10 minutes	most days
Heat before, ice after	about 20 min each	every session

These are targets to build toward, not a ceiling. Short bouts through the day count the same as one long session (Mayo Clinic).

THE LOW IMPACT MENU - pick two you will actually do

Stationary or recumbent bike	10 to 20 min	weight off the joint
Elliptical trainer	10 to 20 min	no impact
Water walking or aerobics	20 to 30 min	pool carries you
Walking, shoes that fit	10 min bouts	talk-test pace
Gentle yoga or tai chi	1 to 2 classes	balance, fall risk

Five options, no gym required. Two of them done consistently beat a perfect plan you quit.

WHAT THE MUSCLE ACTUALLY DOES - why the habit is worth it

✓ Takes load off the joint surface	✓ Steadies the knee underneath you
✓ Keeps range of motion from shrinking	✓ Improves balance, lowers fall risk
✓ Helps keep bone strength	

Strong muscles support your joints, and weak muscles put more stress on them, which can make pain worse (Mayo Clinic).