



# CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

## Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises

### Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Here are some examples of exercises for your ACL. Start each exercise slowly. Ease off the exercise if you start to have pain.

Your doctor or physical therapist will tell you when you can start these exercises and which ones will work best for you.

### How to do the exercises

#### Quad sets



1. Sit with your leg straight and supported on the floor or a firm bed. (If you feel discomfort in the front or back of your knee, place a small towel roll under your knee.)
2. Tighten the muscles on top of your thigh by pressing the back of your knee flat down to the floor. (If you feel discomfort under your kneecap, place a small towel roll under your knee.)
3. Hold for about 6 seconds, then rest for up to 10 seconds.

## Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises (page 2)

4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions several times a day.

### Straight-leg raises to the front



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1. Lie on your back with your good knee bent so that your foot rests flat on the floor. Your injured leg should be straight. Make sure that your low back has a normal curve. You should be able to slip your flat hand in between the floor and the small of your back, with your palm touching the floor and your back touching the back of your hand.
2. Tighten the thigh muscles in the injured leg by pressing the back of your knee flat down to the floor. Hold your knee straight.
3. Keeping the thigh muscles tight, lift your injured leg up so that your heel is about 12 inches off the floor. Hold for about 6 seconds, and then lower slowly.
4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions, 3 times a day.

### Straight-leg raises to the outside



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1. Lie on your side, with your injured leg on top.
2. Tighten the front thigh muscles of your injured leg to keep your knee straight.

## Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises (page 3)

3. Keep your hip and your leg straight in line with the rest of your body, and keep your knee pointing forward. Do not drop your hip back.
4. Lift your injured leg straight up toward the ceiling, about 12 inches off the floor. Hold for about 6 seconds, then slowly lower your leg.
5. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

### Heel dig bridging



1. Lie on your back with both knees bent and your ankles bent so that only your heels are digging into the floor. Your knees should be bent about 90 degrees.
2. Then push your heels into the floor, squeeze your buttocks, and lift your hips off the floor until your shoulders, hips, and knees are all in a straight line.
3. Hold for about 6 seconds as you continue to breathe normally, and then slowly lower your hips back down to the floor and rest for up to 10 seconds.
4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.

### Hamstring curls



## Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises (page 4)

1. Lie on your stomach with your knees straight. If your kneecap is uncomfortable, roll up a washcloth and put it under your leg just above your kneecap.
2. Lift the foot of your injured leg by bending the knee so that you bring the foot up toward your buttocks. If this motion hurts, try it without bending your knee quite as far. This may help you avoid any painful motion.
3. Slowly lower your leg back to the floor.
4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions.
5. With permission from your doctor or physical therapist, you may also want to add a cuff weight to your ankle (not more than 5 pounds) or use soup cans in a plastic bag with the loops around your ankle. With weight, you do not have to lift your leg more than 12 inches to get a hamstring workout.

### Half squat



Note: Do this exercise only if you have very little pain; if you have no clicking, locking, or giving way in the injured knee; and if it does not hurt while you are doing 8 to 12 repetitions.

1. Stand with your hands lightly resting on a counter or chair in front of you. Put your feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly bend your knees so that you squat down like you are going to sit in a chair. Make sure that your knees do not go in front of your toes.
3. Lower yourself about 6 inches. Your heels should remain on the floor at all times.
4. Rise slowly to a standing position.

## Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises (page 5)

### Heel raises



1. Stand with your feet a few inches apart, with your hands lightly resting on a counter or chair in front of you.
2. Slowly raise your heels off the floor while keeping your knees straight.
3. Hold for about 6 seconds, then slowly lower your heels to the floor.
4. Do 8 to 12 repetitions several times during the day.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### Where can you learn more?

Go to <http://www.kp.org>

Enter H713 in the search box to learn more about "**Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL): Exercises**".

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