



Exercises for Osteochondral Lesion (0–6 Weeks)

Physical Therapy Simplified: Doctor of Physical Therapy–Approved Home Routine

Designed to reduce pain, rebuild strength, and restore mechanics following osteochondral injury



How Often to Exercise

Start with 1–2 times per day during the early phase. Move slowly and avoid pushing through pain. Mild muscle fatigue is normal, but sharp pain or swelling is not.

◆ 0–3 Weeks: Motion + Light Activation Phase

1. Calf Stretch with Strap

Purpose: Improve ankle mobility

Benefits: Supports walking and knee extension

How to Do It:

- Sit with leg straight, strap around foot
- Gently pull toes toward you
- Hold 30 sec; repeat 2–3x

2. Hamstring Stretch with Strap

Purpose: Improve posterior flexibility

Benefits: Supports knee flexion and motion

How to Do It:

- Lie on back with strap around foot
- Raise leg upward with knee straight
- Hold 30 sec; repeat 2–3x

3. Quad Set

Purpose: Activate quad without movement

Benefits: Maintains strength while healing

How to Do It:

- Sit with leg straight
- Press back of knee downward
- Hold 5 sec; repeat 10–15x

4. Straight Leg Raise

Purpose: Strengthen without bending the knee

Benefits: Builds quad and hip flexor strength

How to Do It:

- Lie flat with one leg bent and the other straight
- Tighten quad and lift straight leg 12–18 inches
- Lower slowly; repeat 10–15x

5. Short Arc Quad

Purpose: Strengthen quad in small range

Benefits: Improves terminal extension

How to Do It:

- Place roll under knee
- Straighten knee to lift foot
- Lower slowly; repeat 10–15x

6. Long Arc Quad

Purpose: Build strength through full motion

Benefits: Supports stair climbing and walking

How to Do It:

- Sit on chair with feet flat
- Straighten leg fully, hold briefly
- Lower slowly; repeat 10–15x

7. Heel Slides

Purpose: Restore safe flexion range

Benefits: Prevent stiffness and promote joint motion

How to Do It:

- Lie on back with legs extended
- Slide heel toward glutes, then return
- Repeat 10–15x

 Ice + TENS for Pain and Recovery

Use Ice: Apply for 15–20 minutes after exercise or when swelling increases. Place a towel between skin and ice pack.

Use TENS: Position electrodes around the knee (not directly over lesion). Use a comfortable setting without strong muscle contraction.

 3–6 Weeks: Strength and Control Phase

8. Calf Stretch on Slant Board

Purpose: Improve calf flexibility in standing

Benefits: Supports heel strike and walking

How to Do It:

- Stand on incline surface or slant board
- Lean forward to stretch
- Hold 30 sec; repeat 2–3x

9. **Heel and Toe Raises (HR/TR)**

Purpose: Strengthen calf and shin muscles

Benefits: Improves walking control and balance

How to Do It:

- Stand near support surface
- Rise onto toes, then onto heels
- Repeat 10–15x each

10. **Cone Step Over**

Purpose: Improve coordination and clearance

Benefits: Prepares for walking and daily function

How to Do It:

- Line up small cones
- Step over each one carefully
- Repeat 2–3 sets of 10

11. **Step-Ups**

Purpose: Strengthen through functional movement

Benefits: Prepares for stairs and walking

How to Do It:

- Step onto platform with affected leg
- Straighten fully, then step down slowly
- Repeat 10–15x each leg

12. **Lateral Step-Ups**

Purpose: Train lateral stability and strength

Benefits: Builds control for side-to-side movement

How to Do It:

- Stand beside step
- Step laterally onto platform
- Step down under control; repeat 10–15x

13. **Sidesteps with Band**

Purpose: Strengthen lateral hip and knee stabilizers

Benefits: Improves knee alignment in movement

How to Do It:

- Band around ankles or thighs
- Step sideways 5–10 steps, then return
- Repeat 2–3 rounds



Weekly Exercise Tracker

Track your exercises each day. Check off each box to stay consistent.

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