



Stretches for a Stiff Knee After Surgery

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

Designed to improve knee flexion, extension, and mobility after surgery



How Often to Stretch

Perform these exercises **2–3 times per day**, moving slowly and with control. Never force a stretch—mild tension is expected, but sharp pain is not.



1. Knee Flexion on a Stair

Purpose: Improve knee bend using gravity

Benefits: Increases flexion and joint mobility

How to Do It:

- Stand with the stiff knee on a higher step
 - Gently shift your weight forward to bend the knee
 - Hold 15–20 seconds, repeat 5x
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2. Seated Knee Bend with Strap

Purpose: Improve active + passive bending

Benefits: Restores flexion range of motion

How to Do It:

- Sit in a chair with a strap around your ankle
 - Gently pull the strap behind you to deepen the bend
 - Hold 15–30 seconds, repeat 5–10x
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3. Prone Quad Stretch with Strap

Purpose: Stretch quads and anterior knee

Benefits: Improves bending and quad flexibility

How to Do It:

- Lie face down with a strap around your ankle
 - Pull strap gently to bend your knee
 - Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 4–5x
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◆ 4. Heel Slides

Purpose: Restore bending while supported

Benefits: Enhances flexion with low joint stress

How to Do It:

- Lie down with legs straight
 - Slide heel toward your body to bend the knee
 - Return to start; repeat 10–15x
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◆ 5. Heel Prop

Purpose: Improve full knee straightening

Benefits: Helps with extension stiffness

How to Do It:

- Rest your heel on a towel or foam roller
 - Let the back of the knee hang unsupported
 - Hold for 2–5 minutes, 2–3x/day
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Ice + TENS for Pain and Swelling

Use Ice: Apply a cold pack for 15–20 minutes after stretching or when swelling increases.

Use TENS: Place electrodes around the joint (not on incisions) to relieve pain. Use a gentle setting without muscle contraction.

Stiff Knee Stretching Tracker

Track your progress — aim for 2–3 sessions daily

Stretch	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Knee Flexion on a Stair							
Seated Knee Bend with Strap							
Prone Quad Stretch with Strap							
Heel Slides							
Heel Prop							
Ice/TENS Session Completed							

Track your progress — aim for 2–3 sessions daily

Stretch	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Knee Flexion on a Stair							
Seated Knee Bend with Strap							
Prone Quad Stretch with Strap							
Heel Slides							
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Prone Quad Stretch with Strap							
Heel Slides							
Heel Prop							
Ice/TENS Session Completed							

How to Use:

-  Check off each box when you complete that stretch for the day.
-  Goal: Do each stretch **2–3 times daily** to get the best results.
-  Print weekly and use it to stay accountable during your recovery.