



Home Exercises After LCL Sprain

Physical Therapy Simplified

Doctor of Physical Therapy—Designed Home Program to Restore Motion, Strength, and Outer-Knee Stability

This home-based exercise plan is designed to help you reduce outer-knee pain, protect the lateral collateral ligament (LCL) from varus stress, and safely rebuild strength and stability. Perform all exercises slowly, with control, and stop any movement that causes sharp pain or swelling.



Phase 1: Early Recovery (Weeks 0–3)

◆ Hamstring Stretch with Strap

- Purpose: Improve hamstring flexibility and assist full knee extension
- How to Do It:
 - o Lie on your back and loop a strap around your foot.
 - o Raise your leg toward the ceiling until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of your thigh.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 2–3 times per leg.
- Pro Tip: Keep the opposite leg relaxed and avoid pulling into discomfort.

◆ Calf (Gastroc) Stretch with Strap

- Purpose: Improve calf mobility to support normal gait mechanics
- How to Do It:
 - o Sit with your leg straight and loop a strap around the ball of your foot.
 - o Gently pull your toes toward you until you feel a stretch in the calf.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 2–3 times.
- Pro Tip: Keep the knee straight to target the gastrocnemius.

◆ Quad Set

- Purpose: Re-activate quadriceps for early knee support
- How to Do It:
 - o Sit with your leg straight.
 - o Tighten your thigh muscle and gently press the back of your knee downward.
 - o Hold 5 seconds, relax, and repeat 10–15 times.
- Pro Tip: Visualize lifting your kneecap upward as you tighten.

◆ Straight Leg Raise

- Purpose: Strengthen the quadriceps without bending the knee

- How to Do It:
 - o Lie on your back with one knee bent and the injured leg straight.
 - o Tighten your thigh and lift your straight leg about 12 inches.
 - o Lower slowly with control.
- Pro Tip: Keep your toes pointed upward and your knee locked straight.

◆ **Short Arc Quad**

- Purpose: Strengthen quadriceps through a small arc of motion
- How to Do It:
 - o Place a rolled towel under your knee.
 - o Lift your heel to straighten your knee.
 - o Hold 3–5 seconds, then lower slowly.
- Pro Tip: Focus on gentle, slow movement rather than speed.

◆ **Long Arc Quad**

- Purpose: Improve quadriceps strength through fuller motion
- How to Do It:
 - o Sit in a chair with your feet flat.
 - o Straighten your knee fully, then lower slowly.
 - o Repeat 10–15 times.
- Pro Tip: Add a light ankle weight as you progress.

◆ **Heel Slides**

- Purpose: Restore knee flexion without stressing the LCL
 - How to Do It:
 - o Lie on your back and slowly slide your heel toward your buttocks.
 - o Straighten the leg back out.
 - o Repeat 10–20 times.
 - Pro Tip: Use a towel under your heel for easier movement.
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■ **Phase 2: Strength and Stability (Weeks 3–6)**

◆ **Bridge with Band**

- Purpose: Strengthen glutes and hamstrings for better knee alignment
- How to Do It:
 - o Lie on your back with knees bent and a resistance band around your thighs.
 - o Press knees slightly outward and lift your hips.
 - o Hold 3 seconds, then lower slowly.
- Pro Tip: Keep ribs down—avoid arching the low back.

◆ **Heel Raises and Toe Raises**

- Purpose: Improve calf and shin strength for gait stability

- How to Do It:
 - o Stand tall and rise up onto your toes.
 - o Slowly rock back onto your heels.
 - o Repeat with control.
- Pro Tip: Hold onto a counter if needed for balance.

◆ **Cone Step-Overs (Lateral)**

- Purpose: Improve step control and lateral knee stability
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand beside a cone or object.
 - o Step sideways over the cone, then return.
 - o Move slowly with controlled foot placement.
- Pro Tip: Start with a low object and gradually increase height.

◆ **Forward Step-Ups**

- Purpose: Strengthen quads and glutes in a functional movement
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand in front of a step.
 - o Step up with your affected leg, then lower with control.
 - o Alternate legs.
- Pro Tip: Keep the knee aligned over the toes—avoid outward bowing.

◆ **Lateral Step-Overs (on Step)**

- Purpose: Restore side-to-side hip and knee strength
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand sideways next to a step.
 - o Step laterally up with the outer leg, then lower to the other side.
 - o Repeat in both directions.
- Pro Tip: Keep your pelvis level—don't let the hip drop.

◆ **Single Leg Stance (on Firm Surface or Foam)**

- Purpose: Improve balance and proprioception after an LCL injury
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand on your affected leg near a counter.
 - o Lift the opposite foot and hold 10–20 seconds.
 - o Repeat several times.
- Pro Tip: Progress by standing on a foam pad.

Phase 3: Strength, Control, and Return to Function (6+ Weeks)

◆ Calf Stretch on Slant Board

- Purpose: Increase calf flexibility for improved gait and ankle mechanics
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand on a slant board with toes elevated.
 - o Lean forward slightly until a stretch is felt.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 2–3 times.
- Pro Tip: Keep heels pressed firmly into the board.

◆ Goblet Squats

- Purpose: Build functional leg strength and improve knee control
- How to Do It:
 - o Hold a dumbbell at your chest.
 - o Squat slowly, keeping knees aligned.
 - o Stand tall with control.
- Pro Tip: Keep pressure evenly through your feet.

◆ Sidesteps with Band

- Purpose: Strengthen hip abductors to support lateral knee stability
- How to Do It:
 - o Place a resistance band above your knees.
 - o Bend slightly into a mini squat.
 - o Step sideways with control.
- Pro Tip: Keep feet pointed forward—no dragging steps.

◆ Step-Downs

- Purpose: Strengthen quads and hips during controlled lowering
- How to Do It:
 - o Stand on a step and hold a counter for support.
 - o Lower your opposite heel toward the floor.
 - o Return to the top with control.
- Pro Tip: Maintain knee alignment and avoid outward bowing.



Exercise Tracker: LCL Sprain Home Program

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