



Home Exercises After MCL Sprain

Physical Therapy Simplified

Doctor of Physical Therapy–Designed Home Program to Restore Motion, Strength, and Knee Stability

This home-based exercise plan is designed to help you reduce pain, improve knee motion, and rebuild strength safely after an MCL sprain. Perform all exercises slowly and mindfully, focusing on control and comfort rather than intensity. Stop any movement that causes sharp pain or swelling.

Phase 1: Early Recovery (Weeks 0–2)

Hamstring Stretch with Strap

- **Purpose:** Loosen tight hamstrings and promote knee extension
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Lie on your back and loop a strap around your foot.
 - o Straighten your leg toward the ceiling until you feel a stretch behind the thigh.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 2–3 times per leg.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep the opposite leg flat and avoid pulling too hard.

Gastroc Stretch with Strap

- **Purpose:** Improve calf flexibility and assist full knee extension
- **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 a light stretch is felt in the calf.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 2–3 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep your knee straight to target the gastrocnemius.

Quad Set

- **Purpose:** Re-activate quadriceps for early stability
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Sit with your leg straight and tighten your thigh muscle.
 - o Press the back of your knee gently into the floor or bed.
 - o Hold 5 seconds, relax, and repeat 10–15 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Visualize lifting your kneecap slightly as you contract.

◆ Straight Leg Raise

- **Purpose:** Strengthen the quadriceps without bending the knee
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Lie on your back with one leg bent and the injured leg straight.
 - o Tighten your thigh and lift your leg about 12 inches.
 - o Lower slowly with control.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep toes pointed up and leg straight throughout.

◆ Short Arc Quad

- **Purpose:** Strengthen quadriceps through partial 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, lower slowly.
- **Pro Tip:** Focus on squeezing your thigh at the top.

◆ Long Arc Quad

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

◆ Heel Slides

- **Purpose:** Restore knee flexion gently
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Lie on your back and slowly slide your heel toward your buttocks.
 - o Straighten your leg back out.
 - o Repeat 10–20 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Use a towel under the heel for smoother movement.

■ Phase 2: Strength and Stability (Weeks 2–4)

◆ Bridge with Band

- **Purpose:** Strengthen glutes and hamstrings
- **How to Do It:**

- o Lie on your back with knees bent and a resistance band around thighs.
- o Press knees slightly outward and lift hips.
- o Hold 3 seconds, lower slowly.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep ribs down—don't arch your back.

◆ Heel Raise / Toe Raise

- **Purpose:** Improve calf and shin strength for balance
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Stand holding a counter for support.
 - o Rise up on your toes, then lower and lift your toes.
 - o Repeat 10–15 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Move slowly to control both directions.

◆ Cone Step-Overs

- **Purpose:** Enhance coordination and knee alignment
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Set small cones or cups 6–8 inches apart.
 - o Step carefully over each one.
 - o Turn and return to start.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep your knee tracking over your toes.

◆ Step-Ups Forward

- **Purpose:** Build quad and glute strength
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Step up with your injured leg first.
 - o Straighten fully, then step down.
 - o Repeat 10–15 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Avoid letting your knee collapse inward.

◆ Step-Ups Lateral

- **Purpose:** Strengthen side-to-side control
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Stand sideways to a step.
 - o Step up with the injured leg, then step down slowly.
 - o Repeat both directions.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep chest tall and hips level.

◆ Single-Leg Stance

- **Purpose:** Improve balance and neuromuscular control
- **How to Do It:**

- o Stand on your injured leg with slight knee bend.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds.
 - o Repeat 3–4 rounds.
 - **Pro Tip:** Progress by closing eyes or using a soft surface.
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Phase 3: Advanced Control and Strength (Weeks 4–6)

Gastroc Stretch on Slant Board

- **Purpose:** Maintain calf flexibility and knee extension
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Stand on a slant board or incline.
 - o Keep knees straight and lean forward gently.
 - o Hold 20–30 seconds, repeat 3 times.
- **Pro Tip:** Slightly bend knees to stretch deeper.

Goblet Squat

- **Purpose:** Build total-leg and core strength
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Hold a weight at your chest.
 - o Squat down to thigh level, keeping knees aligned.
 - o Stand tall and repeat.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep heels grounded and chest tall.

Sidesteps with Band

- **Purpose:** Strengthen hips and improve knee alignment
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Place a band around your thighs or ankles.
 - o Take small, controlled steps sideways.
 - o Move 10 steps each direction.
- **Pro Tip:** Keep constant tension on the band.

Step-Downs

- **Purpose:** Improve eccentric strength and control
- **How to Do It:**
 - o Stand on a step, injured leg on top.
 - o Slowly lower your opposite heel toward the floor.
 - o Push back up.
- **Pro Tip:** Move slowly and keep your knee over your toes.

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