

From youth to old age, knee exercise is important to maintaining strength and mobility. In our younger days, movement is easy, because the knee has not taken much abuse. As we age, activities like walking and climbing stairs become more strenuous, for several reasons. When muscles are not exercised enough, joints and tissues become inflamed, padding between bones wears away, and arthritis may become a factor. Fortunately, these pains can be eased with moderate, controlled knee exercise. Check with your doctor before doing any of these exercises.

The type of knee exercise that's right for you depends upon your age. Younger people can be more aggressive, while older folks should be fairly gentle. Whichever age group you're in, start out slowly. Quickly jumping into any exercise can cause unnecessary strain on joints, and can cause pulled muscles.

It's best to warm up outside. For both young and old, start by slowly but firmly walking around. This loosens muscles before beginning exercise. The cardinal rule of knee exercise is no bouncing! Bouncing damages knees and accomplishes nothing. Because the types of knee exercise are radically different between age groups, we'll break them down into two sections. The first section is for older folks.

After walking around for a few minutes, you should be warmed up enough to begin some stretches. If you don't want lie on the ground, return indoors. Stretch yourself out, then get in a comfortable position in which your upper back and neck are supported. Placing a pillow under both knees, slowly lift one leg up, bending the knee slightly. Gently lower the leg. Repeat, until you feel a slight burning sensation in your knee or the muscle above it, whichever comes first. Continue with the other leg in the same fashion. Don't overdo this exercise. The result could be thigh muscles so sore you can't walk without pain. This knee exercise strengthens the muscle, and stabilizes knees, allowing you to withstand longer periods of activity.

If you're young, use knee exercise to avoid problems later in life. When finished warming up, it's time to start your knee exercise. To develop good, strong muscles takes discipline. In the first few days, legs and knees may be sore, but that will go away. Start by doing a light jog, about 10 yards. This "wakes your knees up", as well as strengthening knee muscles. Take a short rest, rubbing the knees to relax them. Now, lying flat on your back, slowly pull your knee back to a point halfway up your belly. Return the leg to the original position, then repeat with the other leg. Don't rush, as quick movements can damage tissues.

Young or old, start out slowly, with gentle, steady motions. Remember, bouncing

is the worst enemy of the knee. Don't exhaust yourself, or you risk days of pain or even long term damage. Just keep up your knee exercise program, and soon you'll be a fitter you!