Knee stretches [1]

Dear Alice,

Do you know any good knee stretches?

? In "kneed" of help

Answer

Dear In "kneed" of help,

Knees are extremely complex joints. They are made up of many ligaments, tendons, and cartilage that cushion and connect bones and muscles of the upper and lower legs. Your knees may become sore or injured from overuse, exercise, or simply as a result of daily wear and tear. Both stretching and strengthening the supporting structures and muscles will help, but may not prevent, issues with the knees.

Stretching the muscles that support the knees is a key component of any physical activity regimen. To best support your knees, make sure to include stretches that incorporate the hamstrings (back of the upper thigh) and quadriceps (front of the upper thigh). Below are a few stretches you might try:

**Standing quadriceps stretch:**

- Use a chair or wall for support.
- With your right hand, grab the lower part of your shin, right above your foot and bring your right leg up toward your bottom.
- Try to keep your knees together. You can stop moving your foot closer when you start to feel the stretch in your thigh.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds.
- Repeat on the left side.

**Hamstring stretch:**

- Sit on the floor with your back straight and your legs straight in front of you. Make sure your feet are not extended or flexed.
- Put your palms on either side of your legs.
- Slide your palms toward your feet.
- Stop sliding your palms when you start to feel the stretch in your thighs and knees.
• Hold this position for 30 seconds.

Adapted from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons [2] (they also provide pictures of these stretches).

In addition to stretching, there are some general tips for promoting knee health and reducing the chance of injury:

• **Maintain overall flexibility and strength.** Strong muscles support your bones and joints.
• **Maintain a healthy weight.** Extra weight can put strain on your joints and increase your risk for osteoarthritis and injury.
• **Take time for conditioning.** Make sure you build up to the type of activity necessary to participate in your chosen sport. A good rule of thumb is to build up your workout duration and intensity no more than ten percent each week. Make sure to build in warm up and cool down time when you're getting active, too.
• **Check your footwear.** Wear shoes with proper support. Replacing them when the tread has worn down may be necessary (potentially every six months).
• **Take it easy.** Your body knows when it needs to rest and your knees are no different. Tune in to what your body is telling you. If a certain exercise or activity hurts, stop the activity.

Because some individuals may have knee problems, or be prone to them, it's a great idea to consult with a certified personal trainer before starting a new physical activity routine. If a trainer isn't an option, reaching out to fitness center staff for basic instructions on equipment can also be useful. It's critical to work with a physical therapist or other health care provider if you are rehabilitating after an injury. Lastly, if you're experiencing any knee pain, rest is generally a good idea (and at the very least stepping down the intensity or impact of your activities), as is seeking medical attention for any concerns.

Learning to tune into your body and it's "kneeds" will help you know when to stretch, when to rest, and when to seek help.

Alice!
Category:
Stretching & Flexibility [3]

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