BaylorScott&White
ORTHOPEDIC ASSOCIATES OF DALLAS
A member of HealthTexas Provider Network

Manoj P. Reddy, MD
Sports Medicine & Shoulder Surgery
Orthopedic Associates of Dallas
469.800.7200 office | 469.800.7210 fax
DallasOrtho.com | ReddyOrtho.com

Meniscus Tear

HOME EXERCISE PROGRAM

The meniscus is the cushion between the thigh bone and shin bone. Many tears, especially degenerative ones, improve with strengthening alone. Strong thigh and hip muscles take load off the meniscus and help the knee feel stable.

How to do this program

- Pain rule: mild discomfort up to 3 out of 10 during exercise is okay if it settles by the next morning. Stop any exercise that causes sharp pain.
- Move slowly and with control. Breathe normally; do not hold your breath.
- Do Phase 1 every day until swelling settles and you can straighten the knee fully.
- Add Phase 2 when you walk without a limp, usually after 1-2 weeks.
- Avoid deep squatting, kneeling and twisting on a bent knee for the first 6 weeks.

Phase 1 · Motion and muscle activation (weeks 0-2)

Restore full straightening and bending and wake up the thigh muscle.

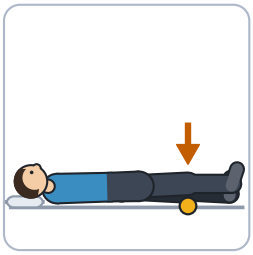


1. Heel Slide

Lie on your back. Slowly slide your heel toward your buttock to bend the knee as far as is comfortable, then straighten fully.

Make it harder: *Pull gently on a towel around the foot for extra bend.*

2 sets of 15 · 2 times a day

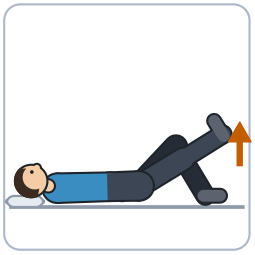


2. Quad Set

Lie with the leg straight and a small towel under the knee. Tighten the thigh to press the back of the knee down. Hold 5 seconds.

Make it harder: *Do it sitting with the heel propped on a stool.*

15 reps · 2-3 times a day



3. Straight-Leg Raise

Bend the other knee. Tighten the thigh of the straight leg first, then lift it to the height of the other knee. Lower slowly.

Make it harder: *Add a 1-3 lb ankle weight.*

3 sets of 10 · once a day



4. Hamstring Stretch

Sit at the edge of a chair with the leg straight and heel on the floor. Keep your back straight and lean forward from the hips until you feel a stretch.

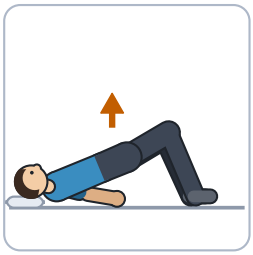
Hold 30 sec · 3 reps · 2 times a day

BaylorScott&White
ORTHOPEDIC ASSOCIATES OF DALLAS
A member of HealthTexas Provider Network

Manoj P. Reddy, MD
Sports Medicine & Shoulder Surgery
Orthopedic Associates of Dallas
469.800.7200 office | 469.800.7210 fax
DallasOrtho.com | ReddyOrtho.com

Phase 2 · Strength and balance (weeks 2-12)

Continue the quad sets and heel slides once a day and add these exercises.

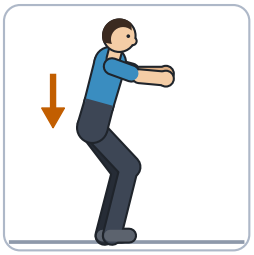


5. Bridge

Lie with knees bent and feet flat. Squeeze your buttocks and lift your hips until your body is in a straight line. Hold 3 seconds.

Make it harder: *Lift one foot off the floor (single-leg bridge).*

3 sets of 10 · once a day



6. Mini Squat

Hold a counter if needed. Push your hips back and bend the knees partway, keeping the knees over your toes. Stand back up.

Make it harder: *Squat a little deeper, but not past 90°.*

3 sets of 10 · once a day



7. Step-Up

Step up onto a 4-6 inch step with the sore leg, then step down slowly. Keep the knee in line with your foot.

Make it harder: *Use a higher step or hold light weights.*

3 sets of 10 · once a day



8. Standing Hamstring Curl

Hold a chair. Bend the knee to bring your heel toward your buttock, then lower slowly.

Make it harder: *Add a 1-3 lb ankle weight.*

3 sets of 12 · once a day



9. Clamshell

Lie on your side with knees bent. Keeping your feet together, lift the top knee, then lower slowly. Do both sides.

Make it harder: *Add a band around the thighs.*

3 sets of 12 · once a day



10. Single-Leg Balance

Stand on the sore leg with the knee slightly bent, next to a counter for safety.

Make it harder: *Stand on a pillow or close your eyes.*

Hold 30 sec · 3 reps · once a day

Everyday tips

- Ice and elevate the knee for 15-20 minutes after exercise if it swells.
- Low-impact cardio is good: stationary bike, swimming (flutter kick), walking.
- Return to running and sports only after your strength and balance match the other leg.

Call the office if

- The knee locks, catches or gives way.
- You cannot fully straighten the knee.
- Swelling or pain is not improving after 6-12 weeks.

This program is a guideline. Your doctor or therapist may adjust it based on your condition and progress.
Call the office for fever, wound drainage, calf pain or swelling, or new numbness or tingling.

Questions: 469.800.7200
Rev. 10/2026