

Physiotherapist Dan Jones answers your questions



If you have a question for Dan, send an email to info@healthandsports.co.uk with the subject of 'Physio Q&A'. All enquiries will be treated in the strictest confidence and no names will be published in the magazine.
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Q At the start of this season I had been training really hard for my rugby team and thought I was in great shape. Now, a few games into the season, I've developed a pain on the inside of my right knee. It seems to get worse towards the end of a match or at the end of a training session. Is there something I could do to avoid the pain, or do I need to rest?" Gareth, Cyncoed.

A **Strengthening the muscles** that support the knee with knee exercises is most important in protecting your knees from injury and knee pain.

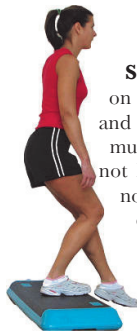
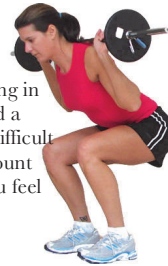
Weak or fatigued muscles cannot adequately support the knee joint or absorb shock before it gets to the knee. The extra stress placed upon the knee can cause injury to the supporting ligaments and tendons. The two main muscle groups that control knee movement and provide stability are the quadriceps and the hamstrings.

THE QUADRICEPS is a four-part powerful muscle that run along the front of the thigh and attach to the front of the shinbone, just below the knee. The quadriceps control the movement and stability of the knee joint during walking and running.

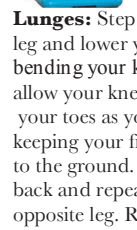
THE HAMSTRINGS are muscles that run up the back of the thigh, and attach to the back of the shinbone, just below the knee. The hamstrings are used to bend the knee and are also needed when extending the hip during sprinting.

To strengthen the muscles supporting the knees use the following exercises in a circuit format. Aim to complete three circuits, taking a rest between each set.

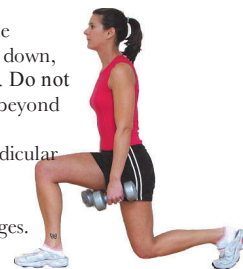
Squat: Keep back straight, knees hip-width apart and pointing straight ahead. Slowly lower and move your buttocks backward as if you were sitting in a chair (don't bend your knees beyond a 90-degree angle, if 90 degrees is too difficult bend even less). Hold position for a count of 5. Repeat for ten squats. Stop if you feel pain in your knees.



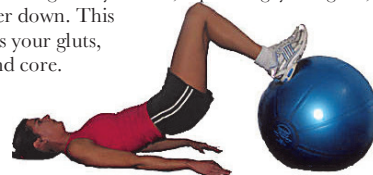
Single leg dips: Point one foot and stand on the opposite leg. Slowly lower yourself up and down ONLY a few inches. Your knees must remain pointing straight forward. Do not let them turn inward. Stand straight, do not lean your body to one side. Repeat for 10 dips on each leg.



Lunges: Step forward with one leg and lower your upper body down, bending your knee close to 90°. Do not allow your knee to go forward beyond your toes as you come down, keeping your front shin perpendicular to the ground. Push up and back and repeat with the opposite leg. Repeat for 20 lunges.



Gym ball bridging: Place your heels shoulder width apart on the gym ball. Now here you should be pretty relaxed here in your neck and in your shoulders, and you can just place your hands right at your hips. Lift your hips up as high as you can, squeezing your gluts, and then lower down. This exercise works your gluts, hamstrings and core.



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