

Exercises after burn injury of the lower limb (leg)

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Following a burn to your leg, you may experience some pain and mild swelling. This is normal and may cause problems with work and everyday activities such as walking.

It is important to exercise your joints after a burn injury to prevent stiffness and resultant loss of function (i.e. unable to move your leg). If the skin over or near a joint has been damaged by a burn, it has the potential to become tight and therefore difficult to move. You could develop a contracture (the skin tightens up) which will cause lack of movement in your leg. This can happen if you do not exercise or move your leg. It is always better to prevent a contracture than to treat it.

During your treatment, you will do exercises with the physiotherapist which will reduce stiffness of your leg and improve your ability to move your leg for everyday activities.

It is important that you continue these exercises at home until your physiotherapist tells you otherwise.

This leaflet will give you advice on appropriate exercises following your injury.

Pain management

You may have been prescribed pain killers by the doctor. Make sure that you are taking these regularly. If you were not prescribed any painkillers, take your normal pain killers regularly (e.g paracetamol). Do not exceed the recommended dose. Your exercises may increase your pain as you are stretching the injured area, so make sure that you take painkillers throughout the day.

Positioning

Your most comfortable position will be when you are not stretching your wound and skin. If you remain in this

position, this can lead to longer term problems with restricted movement and being unable to move your leg.

The ideal position to rest in whilst your burn is healing is with your leg raised. You can do this by using a footstool or pillows when you are in bed. Your physiotherapist will tell you if there are certain positions that you should be resting your leg in.



You may need a splint to maintain your foot or knee position. Your physiotherapist will show you how to wear it.

Scar massage

Once your burn has healed, use a plain non-perfumed moisturiser cream 2 – 3 times a day to keep the skin supple. Work the cream firmly over your scar for approximately 5-10 minutes. This will help with your stretches.

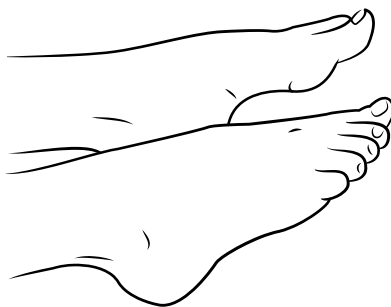
Exercises

Repeat each exercise 10 times every 1-2 hours throughout the day. If you carry them out little and often throughout the day, this will prevent stiffness.

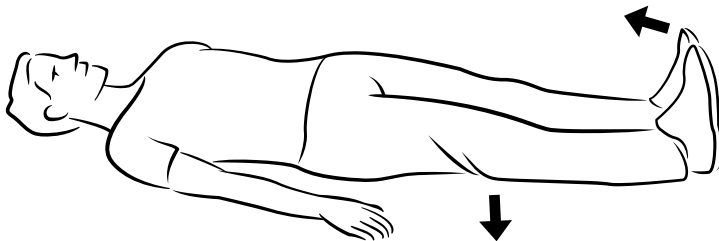
It is important to do your exercises first thing in the morning as you will find that your leg will be at it's stiffest in the morning. This is because you have not been moving your leg whilst you are sleeping.

The first few exercises may be painful. This is normal and will not cause you any harm. Carry on with the exercises as they will get easier.

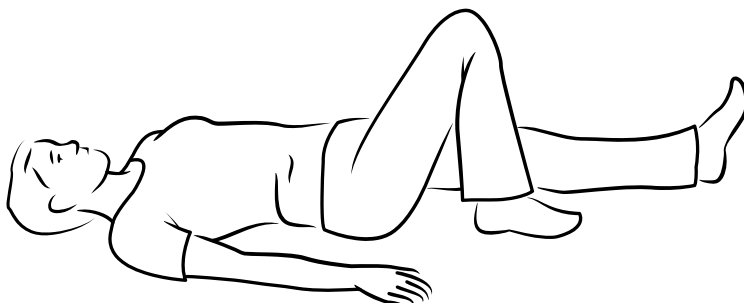
1. In lying or sitting, bend your ankle up and down as far as possible



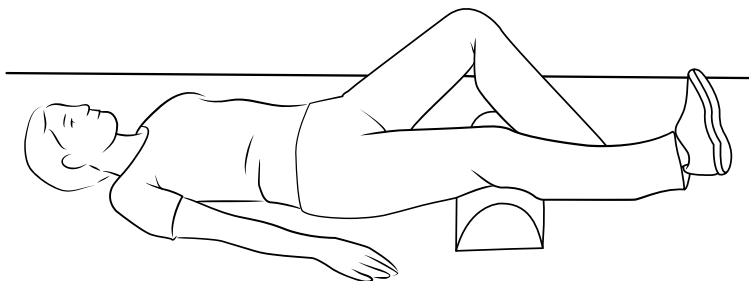
2. In lying pull your ankle up towards you, keep your knee straight and push your knee down into the bed, tensing your thigh muscle. Hold for at least 5 seconds.



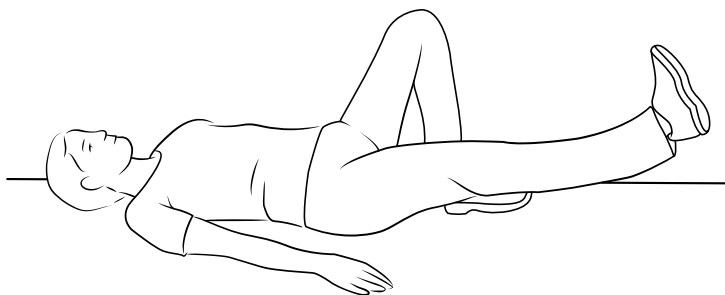
3. Sitting or lying, gently slide your heel backwards to bend your knee as far as you can



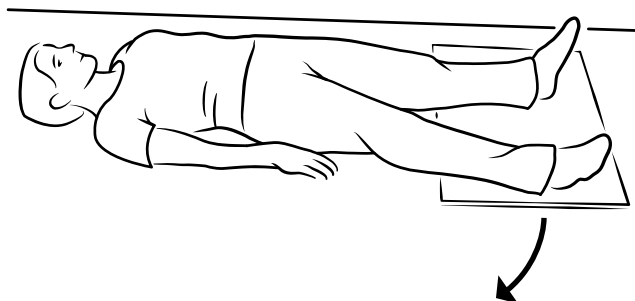
4. In lying, place a rolled up towel under your knee, tighten up your knee muscles and lift your heel up from the bed. Keep your knee on the towel and try and get your heel as high as you can, then relax and repeat. Hold for 5 seconds if able.



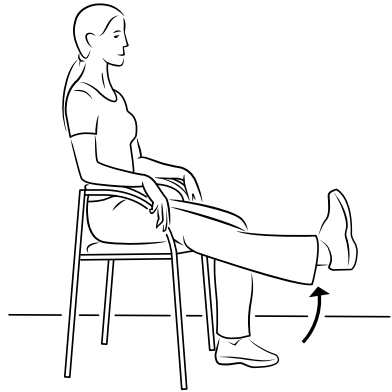
5. In lying with your leg out straight, tighten your thigh muscles, straighten your knee and lift the whole leg about 6 inches off the bed. Hold for 5 seconds if able.



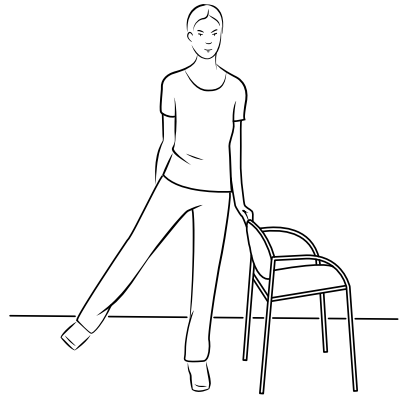
6. Lying on your back. Slide your leg out to the side and then back, keeping your knee straight and toes pointed towards the ceiling.



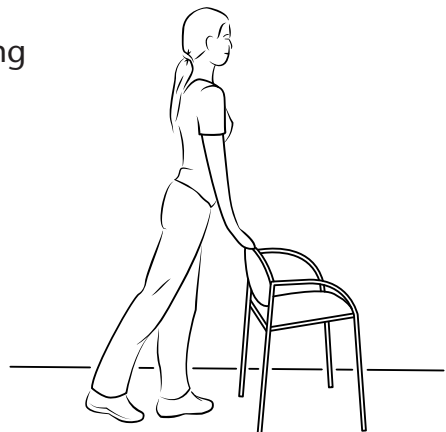
7. Sitting, pull your foot towards you and straighten your knee, tensing your thigh muscle. Hold for 5 seconds if able.



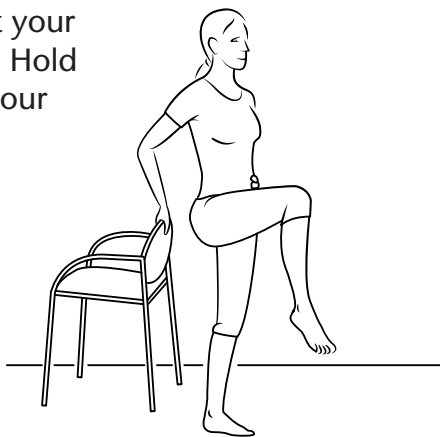
8. Stand with support (using something stable) and keeping your toes pointing forward, move your leg out to the side. Stand tall and do not lean to the side. Move your foot back to beside your other foot.



9. Stand with support, keeping your back and unaffected leg straight, move your operated leg straight back behind you. Don't lean forward with your upper body or bend your knee.



10. Stand with support and lift your knee as if going up a stair. Hold and count to 5, then put your foot back on the floor.



Exercising

You will find that now you have completed your exercises, your leg will feel looser. It is important to keep your leg moving between exercise sessions by using it normally or it will stiffen up between exercise sessions.

You can stop doing your exercises when exercising is easy and you can move your leg freely through the day.

Further information

This leaflet contains general information on exercise. If you have any questions about the exercises, please speak to a physiotherapist.

Or, please phone the **Plastics Therapy Department** on **0141 201 3175**.

If your burn injury makes daily activities difficult or you need further advice, please contact the Occupational Therapist on 0141 201 3175

