



Yoga & Arthritis of the Knees

Description

Start Here: General Approach

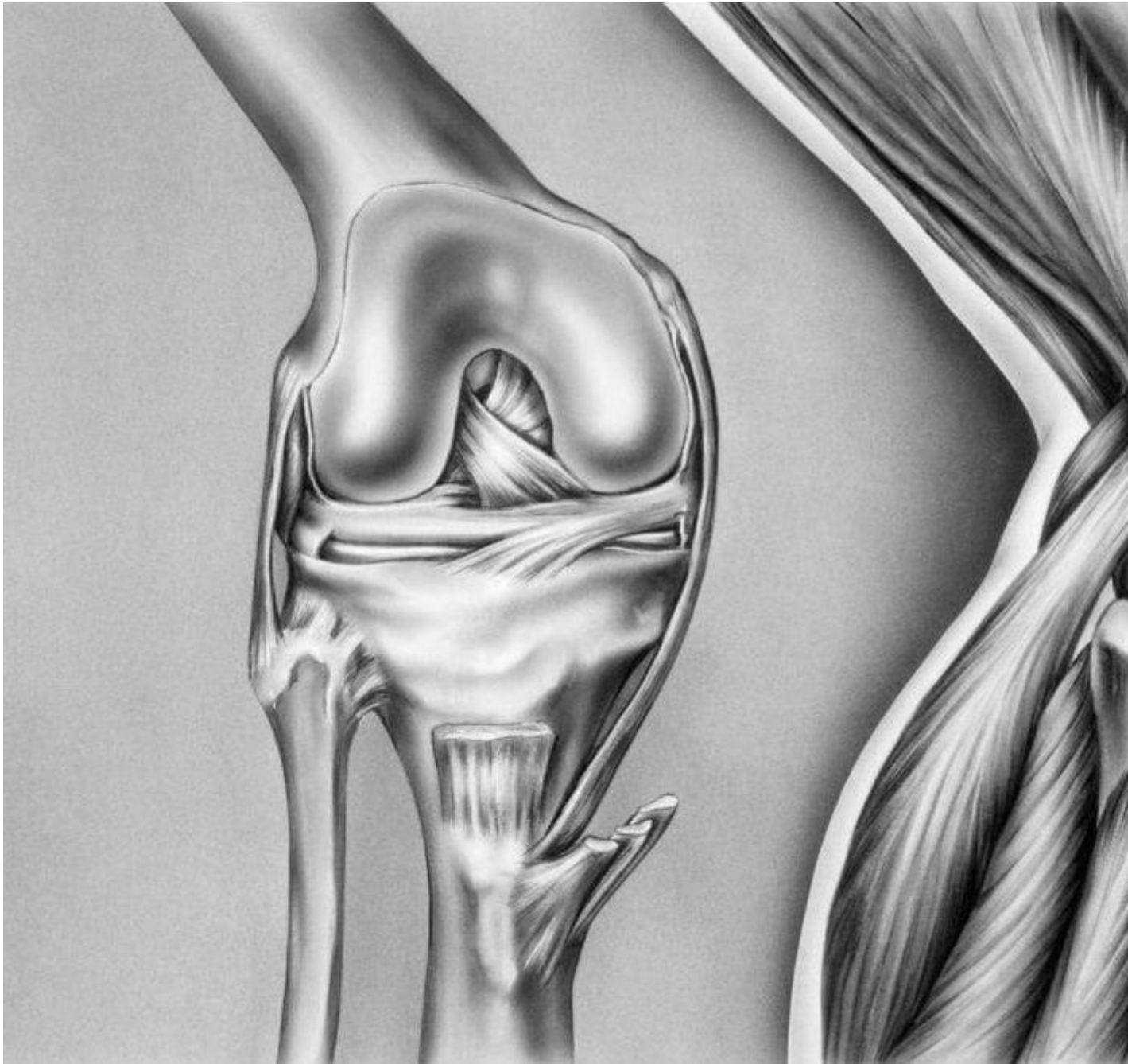


Please consult the following two lessons before continuing as we don't duplicate that important information here.

The considerations offered below are specific to arthritis of the knees and are intended to be in addition to what you'll find in:

- [About Arthritis](#), and
- [Arthritis & Yoga](#)

Why Knees are Prone to Arthritis



Knees may be prone to developing arthritis due to these factors:

- As weight bearing joints, the knees carry the weight of the pelvis, torso, arms and head.
- The way that bodies are structured – wider hips narrowing at the knees – increases the vulnerability of the knees.
- Knees are prone to injury in sports and daily life and such injury can lead to arthritis in later life.

See Also

- [Anatomy of Knees, Lower Legs & Feet](#)

Minimizing Knee Pain



General strategies to minimize [knee pain](#) can include:

- Exercise regularly to keep the muscles around the knee joint as strong as possible.
- Maintain a healthy body weight. (Every extra pound of weight generates four pounds of pressure on the knees.)
- Avoid overuse (meaning too much activity, too often).



- Avoid long periods of sitting. A sedentary lifestyle shortens and weakens the muscles that support the knees
- Be aware of prolonged periods of knee flexion, such as driving. Take breaks to move.

See Also

- [Anatomy of Knees: Function & Issues](#)

Sample Sequence

A Note on Sequencing Standing Poses

- For students experiencing arthritis of the knee, Baxter Bell MD recommends [here](#) that students begin by practicing standing poses where the knees are straight or extended, such as *Utthita Trikonasana* (Triangle Pose), *Parsvottanasana* (Pyramid Pose) and *Prasarita Padottanasana* (Wide Leg Standing Forward Bend).
- Once these straight-legged poses can be practiced without aggravation to the knee (and perhaps there has been some symptom improvement) then, he suggests, try adding in standing poses where the knees are bent. But be particularly cautious about knee alignment.

Sample Sequence

Intention

- Provide a practice for students with knee issues that doesn't aggravate condition while increasing circulation to knees.
- Strengthen and stretch supporting muscles in legs and hips.

Source

- We have included elements from Gary Kraftsow, *Yoga for Wellness* 1999 pgs 197-201. See the book for excellent advice on individualizing sequences with safe adaptations for various conditions.

Sequencing Approach

1. Warm up low back without compressing knees.
2. Gently warm legs and hips.
3. Teach safe joint alignment.
4. Provide gentle circulation to neck and shoulders while heating in standing poses.
5. Stretch and strengthen hips, legs and back, including strengthening musculature at back of knees in *Ardha Salabhasana* (Prone Leg Lifts).
6. Provide gentle stretching and relax low back before integrating sequence with *Savasana* (Corpse Pose).

Sequence Link

- [Knees Therapeutic \(All 75-min\)](#) â?? Includes photo view, list view, and printable class notes.

Pose Modifications



Pose modifications to minimize knee pain can include:

Seated Poses

- Sit on folded blankets or bolsters.
- If knees are â??floating,â?• support knees on blocks or rolled up blankets.
- If bending or crossing legs is painful, extend one or both legs with knees supported.
- Use a spacer (e.g. rolled up wash cloth or a thinly folded yoga blanket) tucked into the back of the knees before deeply flexing the knee. However, â??if you have a history of ACL repair then never use a spacer, as it could loosen this precious repaired tear.â?• [\(Baxter Bell MD\)](#)

Kneeling Poses



- Kneel on folded blanket.
- If kneeling causes pain, then don't kneel. Use other poses to increase strength and mobility of related muscles, and to promote pain relief and relaxation.

Standing Poses

- Avoid locking the knees.
- Use wall, chair or other props and modifications to avoid stressing the knee joint.
- Maintain careful alignment in bent knee poses. Avoid knee reaching beyond ankle to avoid undue pressure on the knee. Use wall, chair, assists or other support to teach and maintain safe alignment.

More Resources

- [Knees: Teaching Considerations](#)
- [General Alignment Principles](#)
- [Asana Index](#) • The • Variations • page of each Asana Digest provides images and instructions for many options.

Poses to Consider



Full Body Stretch*

- From *Savasana*, inhale, stretch arms toward the floor overhead.
- Simultaneously stretch legs and point toes.
- Breathe rhythmically while continuing to stretch.
- *Suggested by Pavitra Sampath.

Tadasana (Mountain Pose) [link](#)

- Teaches basic alignment.
- Strengthens and stabilizes the knees.

Prasarita Padasana (Wide Legged Standing Forward Bend) [link](#)

- Strengthens and stabilizes legs.

Utthita Trikonasana (Extended Triangle Pose) [link](#)



- Strengthens hip flexors.

Goddess Pose [link](#)

- Strengthens quads and glutes.

Utkatasana (Chair Pose) [link](#)

- Option: use wall with or without a stability ball.
- Strengthens hips, thighs and glutes.

Virabhadrasana II (Warrior 2 Pose) [link](#)

- Strengthens hip flexors and knee extensors.
- Avoid practicing too deeply; use a chair if bearing weight in a knee flexed position causes pain. (Shar Ser)

Viparita Karani (Legs Up the Wall) [link](#)

- If the knee is swollen, any reclining pose that elevates the leg higher than the chest will enable some gentle movement of the knee while reducing the effects of gravity.

More Research-Based Treatments

See [Dietary & Nutritional Support](#) shown to be effective for arthritis in general. In addition, the following therapy relates to arthritis of the knee in particular: Researchers systematically reviewed and reevaluated the results of 12 studies. They confirmed that mud-pack therapy, balneotherapy â?? bathing in mineral springs or mud â?? and spa therapy are effective in the treatment and prevention of knee osteoarthritis. These therapies markedly reduced pain, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) consumption and functional limitations and improved quality of life of affected patients. â?? GreenMedInfo

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