

L I V E S T R O N G SM . C O M

How to Regain Leg Strength After Hospitalization

by [KIMBERLY WONDERLY](#) Last Updated: Apr 27, 2011



A prolonged hospital stay often causes weakness in the legs. You lose approximately 1 percent of your lean muscle mass each day you stay in a bed, according to Dr. Andre Panagos, a physician at Spine and Sports Medicine of New York. Decreased muscle mass and weakness increases your risk of sprains and fractures. If your legs weaken to the point that you have trouble standing or walking, consult your health care professional for a personalized leg-strengthening program. Regular leg strengthening exercises allow you to begin regaining strength almost immediately.

Step 1

Perform range of motion exercises for your hips. Start range of motion exercises in a seated or lying position, depending on your strength. Start by pulling your knee toward your chest until you feel a stretch. Turn onto your stomach and raise your leg backward as high as possible.

Step 2

Stretch the muscles around the knee by straightening and bending your knee as far as possible.

Step 3

Execute range of motion exercises for your ankles by pointing your toes, pulling your toes toward your head and writing the alphabet using only ankle motions.

Step 4

Practice standing up from a seated position with the help of another person and some form of walking assistance device, such as a walker, cane or crutches. Gradually increase the length of time you stand as you gain leg strength.

Step 5

Strengthen the muscles in your legs while using an assistive device by standing on one leg, raising up on your tip toes, extending each leg forward, backward, across your other leg and out to the side while you balance on the other leg. Perform shallow knee bends in which you do not bend your knees more than 15 to 20 degrees.

Step 6

Add light resistance to your leg-strengthening exercises, such as that provided by a resistance band.

Step 7

Walk as far as you can without feeling winded or too fatigued. Always have a friend or therapist follow you with a wheelchair so you have a place to sit if you need to, advises Franklin J. Rooks Jr., founding partner of PRO Physical Therapy and a practicing attorney in Philadelphia.

Step 8

Reduce your dependence on assistive walking devices gradually by placing less and less weight on the device as you walk and practice standing exercises.

Step 9

Increase the resistance you use as your legs become stronger by slowly adding resistance in the form of weights on a weight machine.

Warnings

Do not start any kind of exercise program after leaving the hospital without consulting your physician or physical therapist.

Do not start strengthening your legs using the level of resistance you used when you entered the hospital or try to walk as far as you did before entering the hospital.