

Sprained Foot/Ankle Injury

An information guide



Sprained Foot/Ankle Injury

You have a sprain to your foot or ankle

A sprained foot/ankle is an injury that occurs when you roll, twist or turn your ankle in an awkward way.

This can overstretch or tear the tough bands of tissue (ligaments) that help hold your ankle bones together.

These types of injuries can be very painful and may develop after a few hours and usually gets worse over the next 24 to 72 hours before it starts to improve.

Please remember:

- Recovery can take several weeks or even months.
- It may become very bruised and swollen.
- The ankle/foot may become very stiff.
- The bruising may drain down towards your toes.
- These will settle down with rest, elevation, the application of ice and exercises.

Rest

Try to rest your ankle as much as possible for the first 24 to 48 hours. Keep the lower leg elevated when not walking.

Ice

Ice will help to reduce the swelling and pain. Ice should be applied 4 times a day for a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes at a time.

Use an ice pack, crushed ice in a plastic bag or a packet of frozen peas. Wrap the pack in a damp towel or flannel – **NEVER** put ice straight onto your skin.

Elevation

Whenever you are sitting, put your foot up higher than your hip as this will help drain the swelling.

Pain killers

Take simple pain killers regularly such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, which can be bought from the chemist/shop. Take the medication according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Exercise

Exercise prevents stiffness, strengthens the muscles around the joint and promotes good healing. You should walk as normally as possible as soon as your pain allows.

Here are some exercises to do starting on the first day. These can be done sitting on a bed, sofa or on the floor with your legs straight out in front of you. Try and get both ankles to move equally.

Repeat the following exercise 3 to 4 times a day :

- Pull your feet towards you, and then push them away.
- Turn the soles of your feet in and out
- Make circles with your feet inwards, then outwards.

The following exercises should be done as soon as you are able after the first 48 hours. They will strengthen your ankle and hopefully prevent recurrence

1. Ankle alphabet

Sit on a couch or comfortable chair. Extend your leg out and trace the letters of the alphabet in the air with your big toe. If there's no pain, you can repeat this 2 or 3 times.

This gentle exercise helps you to move your ankle in all directions.

2. Knee motion

Sit in a chair with your foot flat on the floor. Keeping your foot on the floor, slowly move your knee from side to side for 2 to 3 minutes. This stretches and relaxes the ligaments around your ankle.

3. Towel and tissue scrunches

Place a small towel on the floor in front of you while you sit in a hard chair. With your shoes and socks off, gently grab the towel with your toes, scrunch it up, and count to 5. Then release the towel and repeat.

Do this 8 to 10 times— or less if you feel pain.

4. Heel raise

Stand with your hands in front of you, resting against a wall, countertop, or chair back for support. With your feet shoulder width apart, slowly rise up on your toes and come back down.

Do about 10 of these at first and work up to 20 or more. Remember, you only want a moderate stretch and no pain.

When these become easy, you can switch to doing it only on your injured side.

5. One-leg balance

With your hands on a wall, countertop, or chair back, lift up your good leg behind you so that your weight rests on the leg with the injured ankle.

Try to hold this for 20 to 30 seconds. As you get stronger, try doing it only with the support of one or two fingers.

When you're stronger, do this without holding on.

Follow up

There will be **no routine** follow up for patients with this type of injury. It can take 2 to 6 weeks for strain and sprain injuries to heal.

If after 3 to 6 weeks you are still:

- Experiencing significant pain or swelling.
- Struggling to weight bear.

Please contact your GP for further advice.

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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