

Ankle Sprain

Advice and Exercises

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is one of the most common types of soft tissue injury. It occurs when the foot is moved through a greater range of movement than normal. This stretches and weakens the soft tissues and ligaments that support the ankle.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Difficulty moving the ankle normally

How long will it take to recover?

The initial pain usually settles after a few days and during this time it is important to follow the simple treatment advice in this leaflet to ensure a good recovery.

The soft tissues (muscles and ligaments) normally take around six weeks to heal, this timeframe may vary as everyone recovers from injuries at different rates.

You are more likely to sprain your ankle if you have sprained it before. Be careful on uneven surfaces, going up or down stairs, and walking in shoes that are not supportive.

What treatment can I use?

Painkillers

If your GP or pharmacist has prescribed pain killers or anti-inflammatories, then these should be taken at the recommended dose.

Cold Packs

A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can also provide short-term pain relief. Apply to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours.

Rest

Try to rest your foot for the first 24-72 hours. However, it is important to maintain flexibility in the ankle so you can gently move it without causing too much pain. This will ensure your ankle does not become stiff and will help the healing process.

Elevation

Raise your ankle above the level of your hips to reduce swelling. You can use pillows to keep the foot up.

Early movement and exercises

Early weight bearing (putting weight through your injured foot) has been shown to help your ankle heal more quickly. For this reason most people with an ankle sprain will not be given crutches.

Try to walk as normally as possible as this will help your recovery.

What should I avoid?

In the first 48 hours after injury avoid the following as they might make your symptoms worse:

- Hot baths or showers
- Heat packs or heat rubs
- Drinking alcohol
- Massage

When should I seek help?

The length of time it takes for your ankle to recover depends on the severity of the original injury. It can take a few months to regain full function.

If the pain and swelling has not shown improvement within 2 weeks and you are unable to weight-bear please seek further medical advice.

General Advice

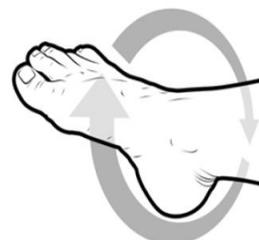
- Keep your ankle moving, as pain allows.
- The sooner you commence early exercise, the better your recovery.
- Once you have recovered, continue to keep your body healthy with exercise.
- Strengthen your ankles to prevent future injuries.

Exercises for your ankle

1. Point your foot up and down



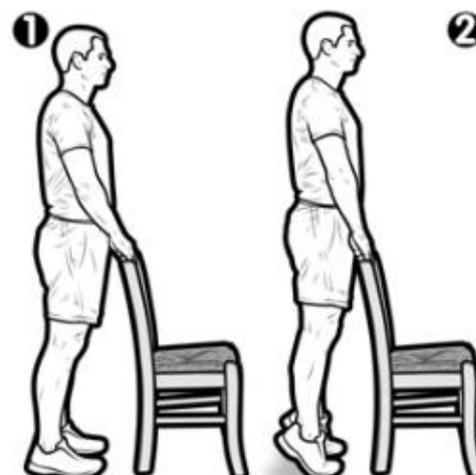
2. Make circles with your foot.
Change direction



3. Sit with your leg straight out in front of you.
Put a towel round your foot and pull it up towards you.
Feel a stretch in the back of your calf.



4. Stand with something to support yourself on.
Slowly raise onto your tip toes and lower again.
Start with 6 calf raises and slowly progress to aim for 20.
The aim is to have minimal discomfort.



Exercise Illustrations: © TheRehabLab

Please visit our website for information on how to access your local physiotherapy service.
<http://sussexmskpartnershipcentral.co.uk/physiotherapy/>