

**NHS Forth Valley  
Physiotherapy Services**

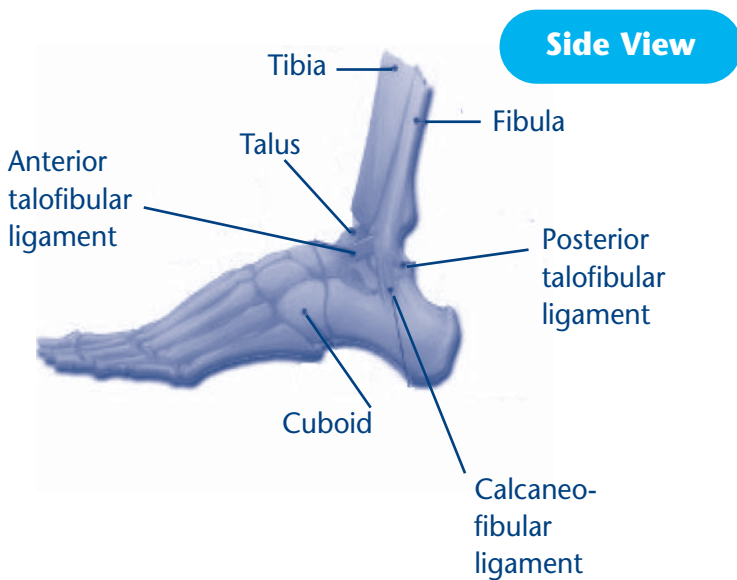
# **Acute Ankle Pain**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of two overlapping, stylized blue waves. The waves are light blue and have a soft, rounded appearance, creating a sense of movement and flow.

## What could be wrong with my ankle?

There are many structures that can become inflamed within the ankle joint due to overuse or strain. The most common ankle injury is a strain of the ligaments on the outside of the ankle following “going over the ankle”. In the early stages after injuring your ankle, you may have some pain, swelling and bruising. If problems persist this may develop into limitation in movement, muscle weakness, walking and balance difficulties.



## What should I do to help these symptoms?

In the first 48 hours after injury, we recommend:

1. **REST** – rest your ankle frequently during the first 48 hours.
2. **ICE** – ice limits the swelling following an injury.
3. Apply ice to ankle 4-5 times a day for 10-20 minutes. Cover a pack of frozen peas or ice with a damp towel. Do not apply ice directly to the skin as it can cause skin damage.
4. **COMPRESSION** – You may have been given tubigrip bandaging for your ankle to wear during the day but remove at night. Ensure that there are no wrinkles.
5. **ELEVATION** – keep your leg elevated when you are not walking, supporting your ankle on pillows/cushions.
6. **PAINKILLERS** – Paracetamol or Anti-inflammatories can be bought at a chemist or supermarket. Always check instructions or ask pharmacist before use.
7. Try to **AVOID** limping by using a walking aid. If using a stick, hold in the opposite hand to affected leg. Wear supportive footwear. Begin by walking short distances and increase as pain allows.

## What exercises are useful?

It is important to regain the movement and strength in your ankle as soon as possible. These exercises are designed to reduce swelling and stiffness in the ankle and strengthen the calf muscles. They can be started as soon as possible, but do not push into pain.

**Exercise 1:** Lying on your back or in sitting, bend and straighten your ankles. Repeat 10 times each.



**Exercise 2:** Lying on your back or in sitting, rotate your ankle, change direction. Repeat 10 times.



**Exercise 3:** Sit with your legs supported and your knee straight. Put a towel around the ball of your foot; gently pull your foot towards you feeling a stretch in your calf/ankle. Hold for 20-30 seconds and repeat 5 times.



After 48 hours add these exercises if your pain allows:

**Exercise 4:** Lean against a wall, bend at the front knee. Keep rear heel firmly on floor. Feel a mild stretch in the calf of the straight (injured) leg. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



**Exercise 5:** Try standing on your affected leg with the other leg off the ground. Keep your balance.



As the exercises get easier, you can increase repetitions. Continue to take painkillers if you need them.

## Will my ankle get back to normal?

Every injury heals at a different rate, but you can expect gradual improvement from 48 hours after the injury. It often takes 10-12 weeks for all the pain and stiffness to settle following an ankle injury.

**If you continue to experience problems and have not been referred to a physiotherapist, contact your GP.**

## Contact details

Physiotherapy Department

Stirling Community Hospital

01786 434061

Forth Valley Royal Hospital

01324 566600

## Patient Appointments/Cancellations

If you have an enquiry about an appointment or need to cancel it, please call 01324 566248.

### If you can't go let us know!

Every month around 2,000 people across Forth Valley fail to turn up for hospital appointments. This costs the NHS millions of pounds each year and increases waiting times. So if you are unable to attend or no longer require your hospital appointment please let us know so we can offer it to someone else.

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