

# Ankle Sprain

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you have with your ankle and to provide some advice on how to manage this. It is not a substitute for professional healthcare advice and should be used along with information you may be given by your GP or Allied Health Professional.

## What is an ankle sprain?

A sprained ankle is a common injury. A sprain is an injury to a ligament caused by overstretching. Ligaments are strong tissues around joints which attach bones together and give support to joints. This injury leads to bruising, swelling, pain and some restriction of movement. The outlook for sprains is usually good, and most people will be able to get back to normal activities within 6 to 8 weeks.

## Causes of ankle sprains

Going over your ankle with slips, trips and falls.

## Symptoms of ankle sprains

- Pain
- Swelling and bruising which can extend to the toes and the calf
- Difficulty taking weight through the leg
- A snap or tearing sound at the time of injury
- Stiffness to move

## Diagnosis of ankle sprains

Most ankle sprains do not need an X-ray but some do to rule out a fracture. The main way we diagnose an ankle sprain is through what you tell us and by examining the foot and ankle. For the first 48 hours after your injury the following should help:

## Protection

Wear a support such as Tubigrip (needs little r), or well supportive shoes, such as lace ups.

## Rest

Stop activities which increase your symptoms especially in the first 24 hours. This does not mean lie down and wait until the problem goes away. Try to walk as normally as possible, some people may require a walking aid.

## Ice

Apply ice wrapped in a damp towel to the injured area for 10-15 minutes every 2-3 hours during the day.

### **Compression**

A support such as Tubigrip. Only wear this during the day.

### **Elevation**

Keep your leg elevated higher than your hip to help reduce swelling.

Gradually over the first week you should be able to get all your weight onto your leg and walk normally. Gradually stop using any aids such as a stick or a crutch.

### **When can I start exercising?**

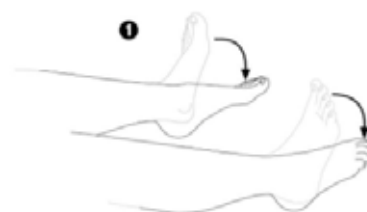
#### **After 48 hours**

Here are a few exercises to start after 48 hours. Gradually increase the range of movement over a few days.

All exercises should be relatively comfortable to do. If you have pain on a specific exercise that does not settle quickly, you should stop that exercise.

#### **Exercise 1 Ankle Flex**

Lying on your back, or sitting, bend and straighten your ankles.



#### **Exercise 2 Ankle Circles**

When sitting or lying, rotate your ankle. Then change direction.

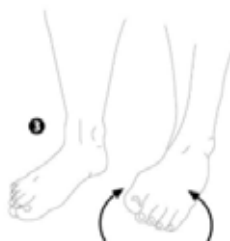


#### **Exercise 3 Inner Foot Raises**

When sitting with your foot on the floor, raise the inner border of your foot (big toe) and then the outer border (little toe).

Within a week of your injury

You should start the following exercises within a week of your injury, as your pain allows. Start gently at first.



#### Exercise 4

Stand on one leg (your injured leg). Make sure that you have support available. Try to balance for 30 seconds. Your balance will be poor at first. It is very important to improve it.



#### Exercise 5

Stand. Push up on your toes.



#### Exercise 6

When standing, tighten your buttocks and bend your knees. Your knees should end up over your toes. Don't go any further. One or two weeks after your injury

**Stretches:** Later (about 1 to 2 weeks after your injury and depending on your pain), you can move on to the following exercises. Also, gradually increase your activity levels.



#### Exercise 7

Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and your other leg bent in front of you. Support yourself (for example with a chair). Lean your body forwards and down until you feel stretching in the calf of the straight leg without lifting your heel off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds, then relax. Stretch the other leg.



### Exercise 8

Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched behind you. Hold on to something (for example the back of a chair). Bend the leg to be stretched and let your body weight stretch your calf without lifting your heel off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds then relax.



### Medication

Many people use medication to help them remain active and to cope with their pain and symptoms. It is recommended that you take your medication regularly. It is best to get advice from a GP or pharmacist.

### Other Intervention

There are other health interventions which may be more appropriate for your condition. These can be discussed with your health care practitioner.

### Work

It is usually recommended that you try to stay at work or get back to work as soon as possible. You do not need to be fully pain and symptom free to return to work. Research shows the longer you are off work the less likely it is that you return.

### Investigations/Do I Need Any Special Tests

The main way we diagnose your ankle sprain is through what you tell us and by examining your ankle. Other investigations may be considered, these can be discussed with your health care professional.

Try to stay positive. There is a lot you can do to help yourself. Most symptoms do settle with time.

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