

## Ankle & Foot Injury Advice

You have been diagnosed with a sprain (known as a soft tissue injury) to your ankle.

A sprain is an injury to a ligament (strong tissues around joints) which attach bones together and give support to joints.

When the ankle is forced to bend more than normal this stretches and injures the soft tissues that hold the ankle and/or foot bones in place, causing inflammation, swelling, and bleeding (bruising) around the affected joint.



The main aims of treatment are to keep inflammation, swelling and pain to a minimum, and to be able to use the ankle joint normally again as quickly as possible.

In order to help the natural healing process, please follow the advice below.

Things You Should Do	Things You Should not Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest for the first 24-48 hours after your injury</li> <li>Use ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for 15-20 minutes every 2 hours if you can</li> <li>Keep your ankle raised (elevated) with your foot higher than your bottom to help prevent/reduce the swelling.</li> </ul> <p>We no longer offer bandages for sprains as they do not appear to help your ankle heal any quicker. Some people find them of benefit and they can be bought from pharmacies or good sports shops</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use ice packs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>over areas of skin that are in poor condition</li> <li>if you have poor sensation to cold</li> <li>if you know you have poor circulation.</li> <li>Place ice packs directly onto your skin as they can burn.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Do not leave ice on while asleep</li> <li>Do not use ice for more than 20 minutes at a time - you will not be helping heal the sprained ankle any faster, and you can cause damage to the tissue.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take pain relief – see advice below - which can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops.</li> <li>• Protect your ankle from further injury, by using a lace-up shoe or boot with high sides or a support.</li> <li>• Put something under your mattress or the end of the bed so that your foot is raised at night.</li> </ul>	<p>Avoid <b>HARM</b> for 72 hours after injury. That is, avoid the use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>H</b>eat, for example, hot baths, saunas, heat packs. Heat encourages blood flow, so, should be avoided when inflammation is developing. However, after about 72 hours, no further inflammation is likely to develop and heat can then be soothing.</li> <li>• <b>A</b>lcohol drinks which can increase bleeding and swelling and decrease healing.</li> <li>• <b>R</b>unning or any other form of exercise which may cause further damage.</li> <li>• <b>M</b>assage which may increase bleeding and swelling. However as with heat, after about 72 hours, gentle massage may be soothing.</li> <li>• <b>Driving: If you drive a vehicle or motorcycle, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are fit enough to drive – your injury may mean you can't be in full control of your vehicle.</b></li> </ul>
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If you are at all concerned about your injury, please contact the relevant Emergency Department: Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287 or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):  
 Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056,  
 Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073,  
 Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) (MIU): 01443 802353  
 Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB)(MIU): 01495 363318

Soft tissue injuries can take several weeks to heal completely. Normal walking is usually possible within 2 weeks and your ankle/foot should be back to normal between 6-8 weeks. You will probably find that your ankle will be swollen more in the evenings especially in the first 2 weeks – if this happens elevate it. You can expect your ankle/foot to be painful during this time. It is important that the ankle/foot is not rested for too long as this may delay recovery so see over for flexibility exercises.

## Exercises

**Begin these flexibility exercises as soon as you can** - provided they do not cause excessive pain – as they are designed to mobilise joints, strengthen your muscles and retain your balance and so improve the range of movement and function of your foot and ankle. The repetitions and sets are a guideline.

## How to tell if you're exercising at the right level

When doing exercise you should listen to your pain levels, especially in the early stages. You may find that these exercises increase your symptoms slightly in the beginning. However, they should get easier over time. It can be helpful to rate your pain out of 10 (0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain you have ever had), for example:

Green 1 to 3 – Mild pain

Amber 4 to 6 – Moderate pain

Red 7 to 10 – Sever pain

Aim to keep your pain within the rating of 0 to 5. If your pain gets above this level, you can change the exercises by:

Reducing the number of times, you do a movement

Reducing the speed of movement

Increasing rest time between movement

### Exercise 1



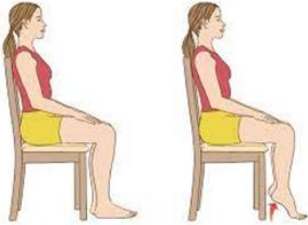
When you are sitting down, or have your leg raised, move your foot up and down x20

### Exercise 2



When you are sitting down, or have your leg raised, turn your ankle clockwise and then anticlockwise. X10 in each direction

### Exercise 3:



When sitting down lift up your heels and then lower them x20

### Exercise 4



Heel raises:  
Stand Holding onto a supportive surface and lift up onto your toes and then lower x10

### Exercise 5

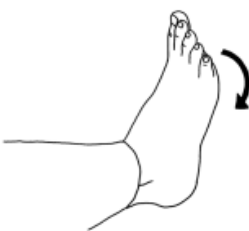


Stand in a walking position with your injured leg straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Lean forward and hold a comfortable stretch for 30 seconds and relax.  
Repeat x3

Do one set with your back leg straight and the second set with back knee bent  
Repeat 3 of each



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## Exercise 6: Balance



Stand on one foot then lift and lower your other leg.  
If you feel wobbly then you may need to hold onto the wall for support. X 10

## Exercise 7:

Stand holding onto a chair and do shallow squats in a pain free range  
X 20



## Walking

Early weight bearing (putting your weight on your injured foot/ankle) has been shown to help sprained ankles heal more quickly- for this reason you may not have been given crutches. Only use crutches if you have been told to and do not stand still for long periods. When you walk do so with even strides (putting your heel down first, then rolling forwards onto your toe) and put as much weight on your foot, as your ankle will let you.

## Returning to sport

It is ok to gradually return to sport whilst your ankle is healing. You don't have to be pain free, but pain should be more of a dull ache with some swelling that settles after 12-24 hours, but avoid sharp pain. Pace up the impact from walking to walk jog to jog and then running. Non weight bearing exercises like cycling and swimming are great exercise to start back with.

## What should I take for Pain?

<p>No pain relief may be needed if the sprain is mild. However painkillers, such as <b>Paracetamol</b>, are useful to ease pain, but it is best to take them regularly for a few days or so rather than every now and then.</p> <p>They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local shops. Make sure you do not take any other product containing Paracetamol.</p> <p><b>With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.</b></p>	<p><b>Anti-inflammatory painkillers</b> can also be used. These relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling, however if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant you should not use them. Side effects sometimes occur with anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious.</p> <p>Some people with asthma, high blood pressure, kidney failure or heart failure may not be able to take them either. You can buy Ibuprofen at pharmacies both in tablet and gel form. There is less risk of side-effects with the gel, however, the amount of the drug that gets into the bloodstream is much less than with tablets and it is important that you use enough gel.</p>
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**If you are concerned about your progress, or if you have not improved within 10 days, we advise you to contact your GP or return to the Emergency Department/MIU department where you were seen.**

Physio self – referral link: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/physioref/>

If you are unable to do this electronically you should call 01495 765715 between 8:30am and 4:00pm Monday to Friday

References: <https://ccs.nice.org.uk/sprains-and-strains>  
<https://nhsinform.scot/illness-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-calf-and-ankle-problems/>

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Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**