

Self Help for Sprained Ankle

Information for patients

What is a sprained ankle?

A sprained ankle is an injury that occurs when you roll, twist or turn your ankle awkwardly, most commonly inwards. This can stretch or tear the tough bands of tissue called ligaments which may cause them to become painful and inflamed.

Risk Factors

- Previous ankle sprain
- Hypermobility (over flexible joints)
- Sports involving changing direction suddenly
- Uneven ground

Symptoms

Pain, swelling and bruising may occur in the ankle following injury to the ligaments. You may also struggle with walking/weight bearing.

Prognosis/Outlook

You are likely to have a very good recovery following a sprained ankle.

Management - Early Stage

- **Protection** - The use of a support or strapping at this stage may be helpful. These are available at most chemists, sports shops or online.
- **Rest** – Some rest, but not complete rest is usually advised. Crutches may be necessary in the first few weeks but not in all cases. Walking as normally as possible is best and helps the soft tissues heal correctly.
- **Ice** – Apply ice to the swollen area for 10-15 minutes at a time three to four times each day. Use a bag of frozen peas or ice pack placed in a towel. Be careful if you have circulatory or sensation problems with the foot/ankle.
- **Compression** – Use your support or strapping whilst there is still swelling present. This will help to reduce the swelling and prevent further swelling.
- **Elevation** – When resting, elevate your foot higher than your heart with the leg supported.
- **Pain relief** - You may take as prescribed or as discussed with a pharmacist as it is important to manage pain early on after your injury

Exercises - Complete every two hours as soon as possible after the injury.

| Diagram | Explanation |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Lying on your back or sitting.</p> <p>Bend and straighten your ankles briskly. Keep your knees straight during the exercise to allow your calf muscles to stretch.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times.</p> |
|  | <p>Sitting or lying.</p> <p>Rotate your ankle. Change directions.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times.</p> |
|  | <p>When your ankle is more settled try these exercises.</p> <p>Push up on your toes. You may need to hold on to a table/chair or worktop for support.</p> <p>Repeat 10 times.</p> |



Stand on your injured leg.

Try to increase the time you can balance. Draw the alphabet three times with your other foot to make this exercise more difficult.

Progress to doing this exercise standing on a cushion or rolled up towel.

Try with your eyes closed.

Frequently Asked Questions

When can I drive?

You are able to drive when you can safely perform an emergency stop and it is your decision as to when you feel ready to do this. It is good practice to inform your insurance company of the injury.

When can I return to sport?

You may return to sport when you can safely perform the actions which are appropriate to your sport. Examples of this include walking, running, jumping and changing direction comfortably.

What do I do if my ankle does not settle?

If your symptoms persist for four to six weeks after following the advice in this leaflet, please complete a physiotherapy self-referral form from your local GP reception desk.

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages.
To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

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