

## 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 - are 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 48/72 hours after your injury</li> <li>• Use ice packs (frozen peas wrapped in a towel will do), for 15-20 minutes every 2 -3hours if you can</li> <li>• Keep your ankle raised (elevated) with your foot higher than your bottom to help prevent/reduce the swelling. We no longer offer bandages for sprains as they do not appear to help your ankle heal any quicker.</li> </ul>	<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</li> </ul>

<p>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>• 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>not be helping heal the sprained ankle any faster, and you can cause damage to the tissue.</p> <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> </ul>
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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 6-8weeks. 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. For the first 24/48 hours, try to do them 10 times 3- 4 times a day, especially after you have taken pain relief and used ice (this reduces pain and makes movement around the injury more comfortable) as this will help to stop your ankle from becoming stiff. They may give you some discomfort but should not worsen the pain – try to move more each time.

Even if you have constant pain you should begin to exercise the ankle gently and walk short distances – try to walk smoothly and not limp. These exercises are designed to mobilise the joints, strengthen the muscles and retain your balance. All these things are important to prevent further re-injury.

### **Exercise 1**

Wiggle your toes;  
Move the whole of your foot up and down



### **Exercise 2**

Bend the sole of your foot inwards then outwards



### **Exercise 3:**

Make circles with your feet inwards and then outwards



## After the first 24/48 hours

### Exercise 4

- Stand in a walking position with the injured leg straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you.
- Lean forwards and down until you feel the stretching in the calf of the straight leg.
- Hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat 10 times



### Exercise 5



Stand close to a table or wall for support then balance on your injured foot for up to 10 seconds  
Repeat 10 times

### Exercise 6

Stand. Using the back of a stable chair to aid your balance, push up on your toes, then lower your heels to the ground.  
Repeat 10 times



## Walking

Early weight bearing (putting your weight on your injured foot/ankle) has been shown to help sprained ankles heal more quickly- this is why 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.

## What should I take for Pain?

No pain relief may be needed if the sprain is mild. However painkillers, such as **Paracetamol**, 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. They can be bought over the counter from a pharmacy or local

**Anti-inflammatory painkillers** 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

shops. Make sure you do not take any other product containing Paracetamol.

**With all medication it is essential that you follow the instructions on the packet or bottle carefully.**

anti-inflammatory painkillers - stomach pain and bleeding from the stomach, are the most serious. 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.

### **Returning to sport**

Before returning to any sport, your ankle should be free of pain, supple and strong. Consider weight training to build up your fitness. Just be sensible and steadily build up your exercise tolerance and use good supporting footwear.

**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.**

**If you are at all concerned about your injury please contact the relevant Emergency Department or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):-**

**Royal Gwent Hospital (RGH): 01633 234056  
Nevill Hall Hospital (NHH): 01873 732073  
Grange University Hospital (GUH): 01633 494387  
Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) 01443 802353  
Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318**

**References:** <https://cks.nice.org.uk/sprains-and-strains>

**“This document is available in Welsh / Mae’r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**