

Soft tissue injury to ankle

Information for patients

You have sustained a soft tissue injury (sprain) to your ankle. This can take approximately six weeks to heal although pain and swelling can continue for three to six months. You may walk on the foot as comfort allows although you may find it easier to walk with crutches in the early stages. The swelling is often worse at the end of the day and elevating your foot will help. If you have been given a boot to wear it is for your comfort only and is not needed to aid healing. Take pain killers as prescribed. If you are worried that you are unable to follow this rehabilitation plan, or have any questions, then please discuss with your GP.

Please follow the management/rehabilitation plan shown below:

Weeks since injury	Rehabilitation plan
0-2	If supplied, wear the boot for comfort when walking. Whether you wear it at night in bed is up to you. It is fine to remove the boot to wash and air the foot when not walking. Begin the 'Initial exercises'. If necessary wean yourself off the crutches as able.
2-6	Try to wean yourself out of the boot and walk without the crutches. Try walking around the house at first. You may want to wear the boot if you go on a long walk. Start the exercises below labelled 'Exercises from two weeks onwards'.
6-12	If the advice in your care plan is followed the sprain should be healed and you can resume normal activity but be governed by any pain and swelling you are experiencing. You should be able to carry out day-to-day activities although arduous tasks/long walks may cause discomfort and swelling. Begin the 'Advanced exercises for sports rehabilitation'.

Initial advice

Cold packs:

A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short term pain relief. Apply this to the sore area for up to 15 minutes every few hours, ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin.

Rest and elevation:

Try to rest the injured ankle for the first 24-72 hours to allow the early stage of healing to begin. Raise your injured ankle above the level of your hips to reduce swelling. You can use pillows or a stool to keep your foot up.

Early movement and exercise:

Early movement of the ankle and foot is important to promote circulation and reduce the risk of developing a DVT (blood clot). Follow the exercises below without causing too

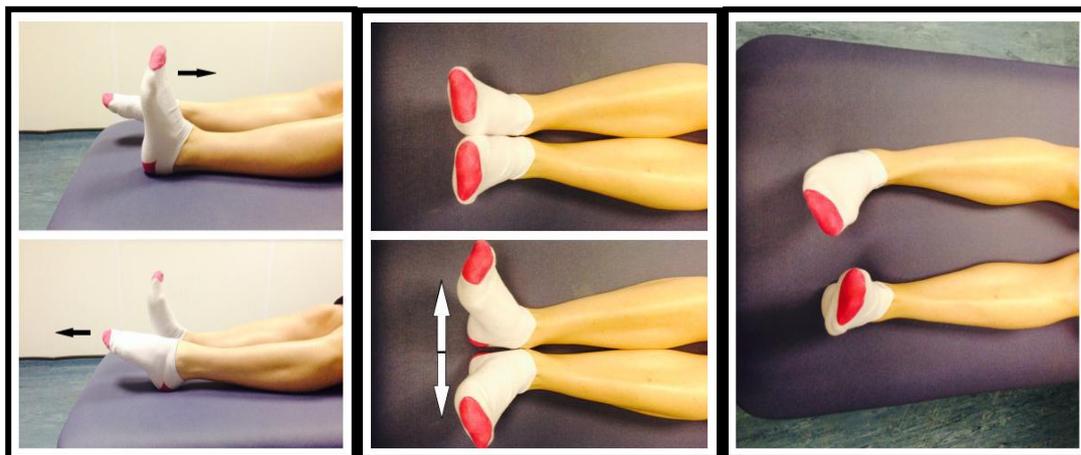
much pain. This will ensure your ankle and foot do not become too stiff. These exercises will help the healing process.

Early weight bearing (putting weight through your injured foot) helps increase the speed of healing. Try to walk as normally as possible as this will help with your recovery.

Initial exercises to start straight away (three to four times a day)

Ankle and foot range of movement exercises. Repeat each exercise 10 times.

1. Point your injured foot up and down within a comfortable range of movement.
2. With your heels together, move your toes apart, as shown in the picture.
3. Make circles with your injured foot in one direction and then change direction.

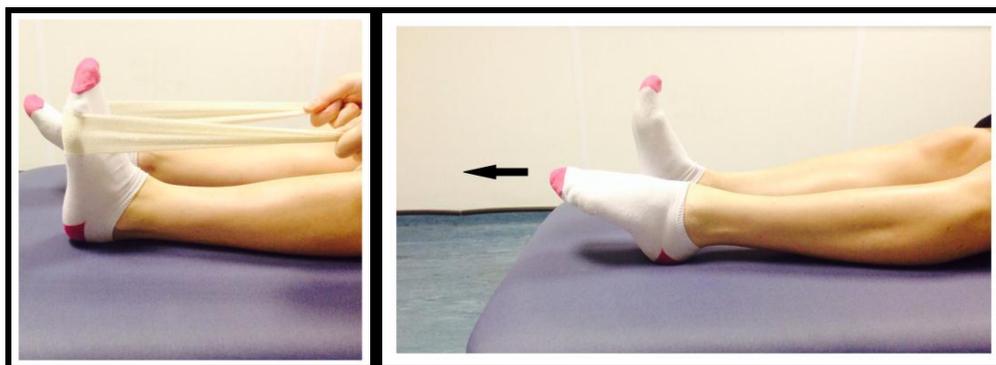


Exercises from two weeks onwards

Ankle stretches

1. Sit with your injured leg straight out in front of you. Put a towel/bandage around your foot and pull it towards you. Feel a stretch in the back of your calf.
2. Point your toes down as far as they go, then use the other foot on top to apply some pressure to create a stretch on the top of your foot.

Hold both stretches for up to 30 seconds and repeat three times.



Balance strategy exercises

Level 1: For patients who could not stand on one leg before their injury.



- Stand with your feet as close together as possible, using something firm to hold onto. Hold this for 30 seconds. If you can do this, move onto Level 1b.
- As above, but removing your hand so that you are balancing. Hold this for 30 seconds. If you can do this move onto Level 1c.
- Holding onto something firm, put one foot in front of the other as close together as you feel comfortable with. Hold this for 30 seconds. Repeat, switching feet. If you can do this easily you may like to try without holding on, but only if you feel confident to do so.

Level 2: For patients who could stand on one leg before their injury.



- Holding onto a firm surface, attempt to stand on one (your injured) leg. Hold this for 30 seconds, making sure it does not induce any pain. Once you can achieve this pain free, move to Level 2b.
 - As above, but removing your hand so that you are balancing. Hold this for 30 seconds. If you can do this move onto Level 2c.
 - Once confident with your eyes open, progress to attempting this with your eyes closed. Always stand in a safe environment with a firm surface close by should you need it. Hold this for 30 seconds.
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Advanced exercises for sports rehabilitation



Level 1: For patients who would like to develop dynamic ankle control for sports.

- a) Standing on an uneven surface such as a doubled-over pillow or wobble cushion, attempt to balance for 30 seconds. Once you can achieve this pain free, move to Stage 1b.
- b) Once confident with your eyes open, progress to attempting this with your eyes closed. Always stand in a safe environment with a firm surface close by should you need it. Hold this for 30 seconds.



Level 2: For patients who would like to develop dynamic core control for sports.

- a) Stand with one foot in front of the other, with your hands together. Swing your arms in a figure of eight in both directions for one to two minutes, or as able.
 - b) As above, but bring your feet so they are touching toe to heel.
 - c) As a) and b) above, but with your eyes closed.
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Further information and advice can be obtained from:

NHS 111
NHS Choices online

 **111**
www.nhs.uk

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone:  01622 224960 or  01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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