

Ankle injury

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have an ankle injury. It includes information about what an ankle injury is, how it is treated and what you need to do when you get home.

What is an ankle injury?

A 'soft tissue' ankle injury is very common. This term means there has been an injury to the non-bony structures of the ankle (this includes the skin, ligaments and/or tendons).

The most common of these injuries is damage to ligaments in the ankle. Ligaments are tough 'rope like' structures that support the joints and keep the bones in the ankle and foot in place. When twisted, they get stretched or tear. This is commonly called a sprain.

If you have an ankle injury, you may have:

- Swelling
- Bruising – this may not show until later
- Pain around the affected joint
- Inability to use the joint normally or put weight on it

Soft tissue ankle injuries will not show up on X-ray. Therefore, you will not need an X-ray if a bone injury can be ruled out by the practitioner who sees you.

How long does it take to heal?

Healing of the injury can take around six weeks on average. This depends on how serious your ankle injury is. A longer time may be needed for complete recovery.

What can I do to help reduce the pain?

If you have pain, take painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, if you can take them (always read the label; do not exceed the recommended dose).

How can it be treated?

For the ankle injury to recover, you need to:

- **Protect** your ankle from being knocked to avoid further injury.
- **Rest** – do not do any activities that will cause your ankle more pain.
- **Ice** – apply ice on your ankle to reduce any swelling. You can use crushed ice or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel. Do this for 10 minutes every four to six hours. **Caution** – ice can cause burns so do not apply it directly to your skin.
- **Elevation** – lift your leg up with your foot above the level of your bottom.

How can I protect my injury?

In the first 48 to 72 hours, it is important to **avoid the following**:

- **Heat** as this increases blood flow and swelling.
- **Alcohol** – this increases blood flow and swelling, and will slow down the healing process. It will also make it dangerous for you to start moving around.
- **Running** as this may cause further damage.
- **Massage** – this promotes blood flow and can increase swelling; therefore, it can increase the damage if it is begun too early.

When can I return to normal activities?

Make sure you rest your ankle for 24 hours after your injury. After this, you need to try walking. Do this by walking evenly – put your heel down first, followed by your toe. You can put as much weight on your foot as you feel able.

Avoid driving until the strength and movement has returned to your foot. The length of time you are unable to drive will depend on how serious the sprain is and how quickly it recovers. You must be able to have full control of your vehicle at all times and be able to prove this. Consider – can you complete an emergency stop? Your GP can give you more advice.

Exercise

You need to exercise your ankle to reduce pain and speed up the recovery time. Walking whilst wearing supporting shoes will help aid your recovery. However, you should avoid sports and heavy exercise until you are fully recovered.

Exercising will strengthen your ligaments and muscles. Repeat the exercises below at least three times a day. Start with two sets of 10 of each exercise. Build up to three sets of 10 and increase the weight gradually.

- Point your injured foot up towards you and then point the foot down
- Wiggle your toes
- Rotate the ankle whilst keeping your knee straight
- Turn the soles of your feet towards and away from each other

What if the pain does not go?

The pain should gradually improve. However, this injury will most likely be painful for three to six weeks. If you are not able to take more than five steps unaided after one week, and you have not been given a follow-up appointment, please return to the Emergency Department.

For general advice, consult your GP or call 111.

Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblink:

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Sprains/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ، ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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