

# Ankle and foot problems

Information for you



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You have a sprain or minor soft tissue injury of your foot or ankle. A sprain is an injury of the ligament, sometimes with a little chip of bone attached.

Ligaments are bands of tough material, which hold bones together. A ligament injury will heal in a few weeks (around four to eight weeks). This depends on your age and degree of the injury.

You should not worry about swelling, as the amount of swelling is not important.

**You can help your recovery by following some simple advice.**

You may have been provided with a **tubigrip bandage**. Always remove prior to bed. This is provided for comfort, but will not aid healing. If it does not relieve any symptoms, do not wear it.

**Painkillers** - You can take a simple painkiller, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Make sure you follow the dose instructions given.

**Sit with your leg up higher than hip** - When you are sitting, keep your foot up and keep moving it.

**Massage** - Gently rub the painful area.

**Ice** - Can be beneficial in first 48 hours. Some people find that putting a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel helps the pain. Do not do this for more than 20 minutes at a time. Do not put ice directly on the skin as it can cause ice burns. Exercise the ankle after using ice.

**Weight bearing** - If you are having difficulty getting up on your feet try to stand with your feet 30 to 40 centimetres (12 to 15 inches) apart, with the weight on your good leg. Sway to the other side putting a little weight on your sore foot or leg. Sway back to the other side. Repeat this, gradually increasing the weight you put on the sore side until you feel fairly confident to start walking.

## **Ankle exercises**

It is important to exercise your ankle regularly to help restore normal strength and function. Some pain is to be expected. Lack of movement may cause poor circulation leading to coldness, numbness, tingly and increased pain.

### **Range of movement**



Sitting or lying. Turn your toes in towards each other as shown above. Then turn the toes away from each other. Keep the legs still during this exercise. Repeat ten times.



Sitting or lying. Pull your toes towards you then point them away again as shown above. Repeat ten times.

## Balance



Hold onto a stable object. Raise onto your toes then slowly lower back down. Repeat ten times or as pain allows.

Stand on your sore foot or ankle and try to balance for up to 30 seconds as pain allows. Hold onto something for support if required.

## Stretches



Hold onto a firm surface. Place the injured leg behind and keep the heel on the floor with the foot facing forwards and knee straight. Now lean forwards to feel the stretch in your calf (lower back of leg). Hold for 30 seconds.



Hold onto a firm surface. Place the injured leg behind and keep the heel on the floor with the foot facing forwards and your knee bent. Now lean forwards to feel the stretch at the back of your ankle. Hold for 30 seconds.

**Driving** - If you have injured your right ankle or foot, you should not drive until you can hit the brake pedal hard without any pain.

**Work** - Go back to work when you can do your job safely and comfortably.

**Sport** - Do not do any sport for at least four to eight weeks. Gradually build up exercise or training, and do not do any sports until you can move your ankle normally.

**Walking** - Ankle ligaments do not take any weight when your foot is flat on the ground. A sprain will not be made worse by walking. There is no need to rest. But, do not over do any activity.

When walking, keep your foot in the normal walking position.

**Do not walk on your toes, heel, or side of the foot, and do not hold your knee or ankle stiff.**

Walk around as much as you like but walk normally and stay on flat, solid ground. It is easy to lose your balance after a sprain so avoid soft or uneven ground, such as grass, stone chips, cobblestones or sand.

Walk slowly and smoothly, and let your joints move normally.

A lace up shoe will provide most support.

**If your pain becomes unbearable, or you have any questions, please contact your family doctor (GP) or the Emergency Department (ED).**

## **Emergency Department**

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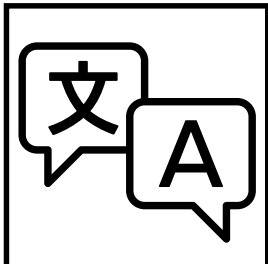
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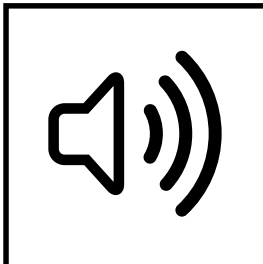
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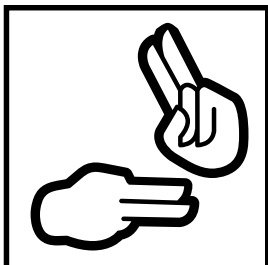
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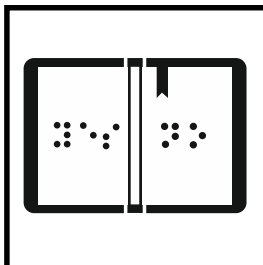
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