

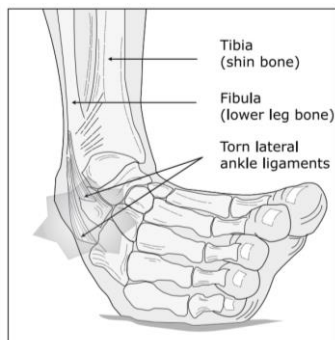
INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Ankle sprains and strains

This leaflet intends to educate you on the immediate management of your ankle sprain or strain. It also contains exercises to prevent stiffening and to help to try to prevent re-injury.

What is an ankle sprain or strain?

An ankle sprain is an injury to the ligaments that surround and connect the bones in the ankle joint. A strain is similar but affects the



muscles around the ankle. It usually happens when the foot is turned or rolled inwards or outwards which can stretch or tear the ligaments, or muscles, in the ankle. There are different grades depending on the severity or the injury. It usually affects the tissues on the outside of the ankle as it is most common for the foot to roll inwards (inversion) and can lead to pain, swelling and bruising, and stiffness in the ankle.

Management

Ankle sprains and strains are managed in the same way, with 6 steps. This can be remembered with the word **POLICE**:

- **Protect** the injury with relative rest (keep moving but rest often).
- **Optimal Loading** by gradually increasing the weight through the affected limb early on. Evidence suggests this aids quicker recovery. If you are struggling with your walking or weight bearing, you may be provided with crutches to help.
- **Ice, Compression and Elevation** of the leg to aid with reducing the swelling is also important.

As the pain starts to settle down you should be able to gradually return to normal activity as comfort allows. Try to walk as normally as possible as early weight bearing can aid quicker recovery.

Pain management

If you are able to take simple pain relief this may help initially, however, if you are not sure if you can take them please speak to either a pharmacist or your GP. Keeping moving and exercising may help to increase confidence and reduce the pain in the ankle.

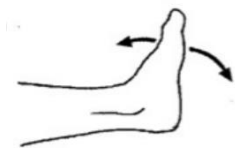
Exercises

It is very important to start the following exercises as soon as possible to prevent stiffening and losing range of motion within your ankle.

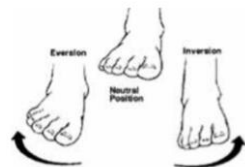
This should ideally be within 48-72 hours of injury. They should be done as pain allows, with some discomfort being acceptable

The exercises:

1) Ankle range of movement

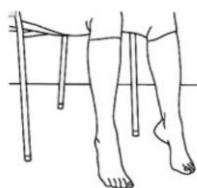


Keep your ankle moving by bringing your toes up and down, and moving your foot from side to side. You can also try writing the alphabet with your foot.



2) Heel raises:

Start off in sitting; lift your heels off the floor as if you are going onto your tip-toes. As this starts to get easier you can progress to standing holding lightly on to something for support.



3) Standing on one leg:

Standing on one leg is important to improve the stability of the ankle you have injured. You may find that you struggle to balance on the leg of the injured ankle so it is important to slowly build up from standing with support to standing without support and practicing your balance.



Factors affecting healing

Normal healing normally lasts six to eight weeks. However, experiencing discomfort and swelling for longer than this is normal for this type of injury.

Staying on top of the following factors can help move the healing process along and give your ankle the best chance of a swift recovery:

Stress relief - utilise techniques such as mindfulness, meditation and deep breathing cycles. Speak to your health care professional for more information.

Sleep hygiene - consistently getting 6-9 hours is recommended by the NHS. Only use your bedroom for sleep, e.g. not for TV.

Nutrition - make sure you have a balanced diet. Vitamin D has been correlated with reduction in joint pain.

Alcohol – avoid alcohol in the early stages of healing (first three days). Evidence has shown this can slow down recovery and increase the chances of re-injury.

Smoking – this has been linked with musculoskeletal pain and delayed healing. For more advice see smoking cessation or ask your therapist for more information.

General exercise – general cardiovascular exercise, such as a brisk walk each day, stimulates blood flow to the area.

You may require one-to-one physiotherapy if you are still struggling with your ankle after a few weeks of following this advice. If so, please contact us – details are on the following page.

Clinic 10, Physiotherapy Department
Telephone: 01623 672384

King's Mill Hospital
Mansfield Road
Sutton in Ashfield
Nottinghamshire
NG17 4JL

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 622515

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet (if relevant) please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office
Leaflet code: PIL202405-03-ASS
Created: May 2020 / Revised: May 2024 / Review
Date: May 2026