

Ankle Sprain

This leaflet offers general information about ankle sprains and simple exercises that may help. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a clinician.

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is one of the most common foot and ankle injuries. It occurs when the foot is moved through a greater range of movement than normal. This stretches the soft tissues and ligaments that support the ankle.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Reduced range of movement.

How to best manage an acute ankle sprain?

Protect the injury

Protect and rest the foot for the first 24-72 hours. Avoid heat, alcohol, running and massage.

Keep it moving

It is important to maintain strength and flexibility in the ankle. Gently move your ankle as much as is comfortable to do so, little and often and try to put weight through your foot as soon as possible. Try to walk short distances. This helps prevent muscles around your foot and ankle from becoming tight and weak and stops the ankle stiffening up.

Cold packs

A cold pack (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can provide short-term pain relief. Apply to the sore area for up to 10 minutes, every few hours. Do not fall asleep when applying an ice pack as this may increase your risk of an ice burn.

Medication

Paracetamol or topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) cream can be helpful. If you are still struggling two days after the injury you can start taking oral NSAIDs. If you are unsure what to take please consult a pharmacist. If your GP has prescribed pain killers, then these should be taken at the recommended dose.

Elevation

Support your leg on pillows to elevate your ankle higher than your hip. This will help to reduce the swelling.

How long will it take to recover?

The initial pain usually settles after a few days. The soft tissues (muscles and ligaments) normally take around six weeks to heal; this timeframe may vary as everyone recovers from injuries at different rates.

You are more likely to sprain your ankle if you have sprained it before. Be careful on uneven surfaces, going up and down stairs. Wear shoes that are flat and supportive, e.g. trainers

When should I seek help?

The length of time it takes for your ankle to recover depends on the severity of the original injury. It can sometimes take a few months to regain full function.

If the pain and swelling have not improved at all within three weeks and you are still unable to bear weight please seek further medical advice.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

- Keep your ankle moving, as pain allows.
- The sooner you start early exercise, the quicker your recovery will be.
- Once you have recovered, continue to keep your body healthy with exercise.
- If your symptoms get worse or do not improve, please seek further advice.
- Complete these exercises once a day, every other day:

Complete three sets of 8-12 repetitions.

1. Squat



Step 1:

Stand with your feet hip width apart.

Step 2:

Bend your knees and push your bottom backwards. Don't let your knees come over your toes.

2. Heel raisers



Step 1:

Hold onto a support if needed.

Step 2:

Push up onto your tip toes, and slowly bring your heels back to the floor.

3. Single leg stand – use a support to hold onto if needed at first if needed.



Step 1:

Stand on one leg for at least 10 seconds. Squeeze your leg muscles for greater control.

Step 2:

Try to build up the seconds you can stand on one leg.

Active range of movement - with or without resistance.



Step 1:

Using a Theraband, place it around your feet.

Step 2:

Move your feet outwards,



Step 1:

Move your ankles in all directions. Slowly point your toes away from you, and towards you.

Step 2:

Then point the soles of your feet in towards each other and then away from each other.

Useful sources of information

<https://www.csp.org.uk/conditions/managing-pain-home/managing-your-ankle-pain>

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MSK Physiotherapy team on 020 8812 4018 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: THE_AS_01 **Published:** November 2020 **Review date:** November 2022