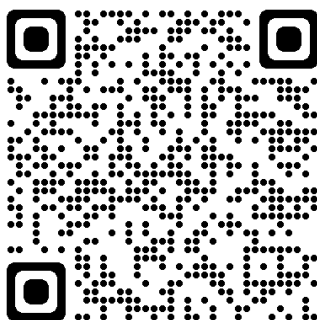


# Ankle Sprains

**This leaflet provides information about ankle sprains. If you have access to the internet, you can also access our self-help app for ankle problems. Details on how to access this are at the bottom of the leaflet. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a clinician.**

If you have access to the internet and / or a smartphone we recommend using the getUBetter app ([getUBetter - Request Access](#)). It provides tailored support and advice for your symptoms. Please use the QR code below to access. You can access physiotherapy via the app if your symptoms are persisting. If you don't have access to the internet or a smartphone, please contact your GP practice for advice.



## What is a lateral ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is a common type of soft tissue injury. It happens when the foot is moved beyond its normal range of movement, causing the soft tissues and ligaments which support the ankle to stretch beyond what they normally would with general activity.

An X-Ray or scan is not usually required to diagnose this injury. In some cases, if there is suspicion of a fracture, an x-ray may be arranged to rule this out.

You can put as much weight through your foot and walk as comfort allows. Walking little and often will aid your recovery. You may be provided with a boot or crutches to use for comfort; however, these have not been proven to help with healing and may not be needed.

If you have not been provided with a boot, you should ensure you wear comfortable and supportive footwear such as trainers or walking boots.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Pain
- Stiffness or reduced movement of the ankle
- Swelling of the foot and ankle
- Bruising of the foot and ankle.

## How long will it take to recover?

Initial high pain levels are likely to last a few days. During this time, we advise you follow the guidance provided below. Most ankle sprains will improve within 6-12 weeks, depending on the severity of injury, and do not cause lasting problems. However, swelling and pain can continue for three to six months post-injury. Swelling can sometimes get worse at the end of the day and can be helped with elevation and ice. Gentle activity and movement can help to speed up recovery.

## What to do in the first 72 hours

You will likely still have swelling and pain around your ankle. Relative rest for the first 24 to 72 hours is important but ensure you are following the guidance below to help with pain and swelling during this period.

## What treatments are available?

### Medication

Medication in tablet or cream form can be helpful to manage pain, following instructions on the packaging. If your GP has prescribed pain relief, then this should be taken at the recommended dose. If you are still struggling to manage your pain and are unsure what to take, please consult a medical professional.

### Gradual return to usual activities and walking

Resting in the short term can be helpful in reducing pain. Continued rest may lead to increased joint stiffness, weakness and poor balance. Aim to do as much as you can within your comfort limits, without pushing beyond the pain.

### Cold

A cold pack (an ice pack or a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) can also give short term pain relief. Use whichever pack you find the most helpful and apply to the sore area for up to five to 10-15 minutes, every hour or so. Ensure cold treatment is *not in direct contact with skin* and check the skin regularly while icing.

### Elevation

Elevate your foot to above hip level to help reduce the swelling for the first few days. If swelling continues you can still elevate your leg for short periods throughout the day.

## Early movement and exercise

Try to return to normal activities of daily living as soon as possible to help maintain movement in your ankle. This may be uncomfortable to start with but it is safe to do so. The exercises should not increase your pain.

The exercises below can be started immediately after injury and should be completed a few times a day:



### **Ankle Circles / Ankle Pumps:**

Alternate between pulling your foot towards you and pointing it away and making circles with it to regain range of movement at the ankle joint.



### **Dorsiflexion stretch:**

Stand with your stiff ankle approximately 5cm away from the wall. Gently lean towards the wall and bend the ankle and knee towards the wall as far as the ankle will allow. Return to start position and repeat smoothly and gently.

As your movement improves your knee will touch the wall more easily. Take your foot away from the wall in 2cm increments as this happens until it is the same distance away as your good leg can achieve.

## Exercises to start two to four weeks after injury



### **Heel Raise:**

Start in a balanced stance with your feet shoulder width apart and then raise yourself up on your toes as high as possible. Return to the starting position.



### **Soleus Heel Raise:**

Stand with both legs bent slightly and your heels flat on the floor. Keeping your knees slightly bent, rise up onto your toes and control the movement as you lower your heels back down.



### **Single Leg Balance:**

Balance on your symptomatic leg for as long as you can.



### **Resisted Eversion:**

Sit with your legs straight. Place a resistance band around each foot, close to your toes. Make sure your legs are spread apart, so there is tension in the band. Use one foot as an anchor as you turn the injured foot outwards, away from your body. Control the return to the starting position.

If you are struggling to manage your exercises then you could seek a referral to a physiotherapist who can provide you with further guidance.

## **Other helpful tips**

Sometimes other factors can influence your symptoms of pain and swelling, including lifestyle, sleep hygiene, stress, mood and diet.

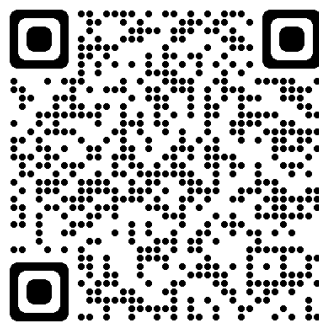
Managing these through exercise (as your symptoms allow), relaxation, meditation, mindfulness, breathing exercises, sleeping and eating well, can positively affect your pain levels and your general health.

## When to seek further help

Recovery time depends on the severity of the injury but most soft tissue injuries resolve within 12 weeks. Your symptoms should not be worsening.

If your pain and swelling are not improving at all within a week, or you can't put any weight through your affected foot, please seek further medical advice from your GP or through the app detailed below.

If you have access to the internet and / or a smartphone we recommend using the getUBetter app ([getUBetter - Request Access](#)). It provides tailored support and advice for your symptoms. Please use the QR code below to access. You can access physiotherapy via the app if your symptoms are persisting. If you don't have access to the internet or a smartphone, please contact your GP practice for advice.



## Other useful sources of information

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

[The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy | The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#)

NHS UK

[Sprains and strains - NHS](#)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the MSK Physiotherapy team on [mskphysioenquiries@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:mskphysioenquiries@stgeorges.nhs.uk) (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments, and services offered at our hospitals, please visit:

[Resources for patients – Start your recovery today! - St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#)

and

[www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact [patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk) and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS UK

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

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://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 our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://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.



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