



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Ankle injuries

Issued by the walk-in services and minor injury units



The purpose of this leaflet is to help you with your sprained ankle.

## **What is a sprained ankle?**

Bruising may be present within the first 48 hours (this can also spread up the leg or to the toes and may take weeks to clear). The ankle tends to swell up straight away, as can the whole foot. The ankle becomes stiff and painful and weight bearing through the leg can be difficult.

This occurs when the ankle joint supporting structures are taken past their normal limits. Due to this the supporting ligaments and tendons tend to be stretched or sprained.

By following the information within this leaflet your ankle should heal with minimal problems.

## **Alternatives / options for treatment**

The most important things to do once you have sprained your ankle are to reduce pain and swelling to maintain movement of the joint. Moderate rest is recommended for the first few days.

## **Painkillers**

Simple painkillers that can be bought at your local pharmacy can be helpful. Ask your pharmacist or GP for advice on which medication may be suitable for you. Painkillers need to be taken regularly at the stated intervals for them to benefit you.

## Ice packs

Ice packs help to reduce inflammation during early stages following an injury. It cools the area down and reduces swelling.

- Use a bag of frozen peas or crushed ice cubes placed in a plastic bag.
- Protect your skin from ice burns with a damp flannel or cloth. Place your cold pack on top of the painful area and wrap the towel around to hold it in place. Never apply ice directly to the skin as this may result in an ice burn.
- Ice packs can be applied two to three times a day for 20 minutes, leaving two hours between applications.

## Bandage / Tubigrip (stretch material bandage)

If you have been provided with one of these it should go from the toes to the knee with no local creases and should be removed for sleep and during elevation.

## Elevation

It is important to elevate the ankle to about waist level. This will ensure that the swelling subsides allowing more movement and reducing pain. Sit or lie down with your leg supported by some pillows.

## Exercises

Try starting with 5 repetitions of each exercise and slowly build up the number you do.

1. Point your toes away and then gently pull your foot backwards. Rotate your ankle in both directions.

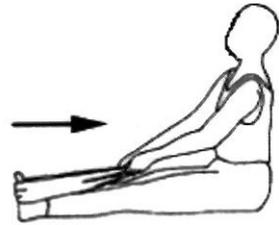


2. Place both hands onto a wall, step the injured foot behind with the toes pointing forward.



3. Keeping the affected heel on the floor slowly bend the knee until you can feel a stretch on the back of the leg.

**4.** Sitting with your back supported and both legs out straight, loop a towel around the ball of your foot. Grasp the towel with both hands. Slowly pull back, increasing the tension of the towel, until you can feel the upper calf stretch.



**5.** Regaining your balance is vital. As soon as possible try standing on your affected leg, initially supporting yourself with a wall, then unaided. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times. As you improve, try closing your eyes to help develop your balance.



Ankle sprains can take up to six weeks to completely get better. If during that time your symptoms worsen see your GP or a physiotherapist.

<sup>1</sup> Physio Tools Ltd.

## Contact

Should you have any questions or queries please ring 0844 811 8111 and ask for one of the following:

A&E Reception, Wansbeck General Hospital  
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

A&E Reception, North Tyneside General Hospital  
(Open from 8am to Midnight)

A&E Reception, Hexham Children's Unit, Wansbeck  
(Open from 8am to 10pm)

Alnwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24hours)

Berwick Minor Injury Unit (Open 24 hours)

Blyth Minor Injury Unit (Open from 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

You can call NHS 111 for urgent medical advice 24/7.



## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

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

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