

Virtual Fracture Clinic

Ankle sprain (soft tissue ankle injury)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

The Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) helps you recover from your injury without needing to come back to the hospital. This is called self-management.

Use the rehabilitation plan in this leaflet to guide your recovery.

Video about your injury and recovery

Watch this video to help your recovery. A doctor explains your injury and a physiotherapist shows how to do the exercises:

www.fracturecare.co.uk/care-plans/ankle/ankle-sprain/

What is an ankle soft tissue injury?

This is a soft tissue injury or sprain to the ligament in your ankle. This is a common injury that will heal naturally in time.

Healing

It takes approximately 6 to 12 weeks for this to heal

Smoking slows down your healing. So, we advise that you stop smoking (including vaping) while your fracture heals. Talk to your GP or go to nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/ for more information.

Pain and swelling

Your ankle may be swollen and painful. Swelling is often worse at the end of the day.

You can expect to have mild pain and swelling for 6 to 12 months after your injury.

You can help reduce pain and swelling by:

- taking pain medication
- raising your ankle on a stool or cushions above the level of your hip (elevating)
- using ice or cold packs



Raise your ankle and use ice or cold packs to reduce pain and swelling

Walking and your boot

The boot protects your ankle and will make you more comfortable. Wear the boot when you are standing and walking or the first 2 to 4 weeks.

You can take it off at night and at rest.

Please tell us if you are diabetic; you may need a special boot.

You are allowed to put weight through your foot. You may find it easier to use crutches in the early stages



A boot protects your ankle and will make you feel more comfortable

Exercises

It is important to start exercises as soon as possible. Good rehabilitation will improve your recovery.

You can expect some discomfort to start. Do not continue if the pain gets worse and you cannot tolerate it. Follow the instructions on the next pages.

Follow up

Follow-up appointments are not usually needed for this injury. Patients usually recover well with self-management. But please contact our team if you still have significant pain or swelling 4 weeks after your injury

Caring for your injury: weeks 1 to 4

Remember to wear your boot whenever standing and walking for the first 2 to 4 weeks. You can remove the boot when resting and at night. Wear a long sock in your boot.

Using a cold pack will help with your pain and swelling.

- use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel
- put this on your ankle for up to 15 minutes every few hours
- make sure the ice is not in direct contact with your skin

Try to rest your ankle, especially in the first 24 to 72 hours. Raise your ankle on a stool or cushions so that it is above the level of your hip. This will help to reduce your swelling.

Exercises

It's important to move your ankle and foot as soon as you can. This promotes circulation and reduces the risk of developing a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis).

Do these exercises 3 to 4 times a day. Start straight away, working within your pain levels.



Point your foot up and down. Repeat 10 times.



With your heels together, move your toes apart to turn the foot outwards. Repeat 10 times. Do this movement gently so you remain comfortable.



Make gentle circles with your foot in one direction and then the other direction. Repeat 10 times.

Caring for your injury: weeks 4 to 6

You can now stop using your boot.

Start by walking without the boot around your own home. Build up to walking without it outside or for longer walks. You should not be using your boot after 6 weeks post injury.

It is normal to still have mild discomfort and swelling. This may continue for 6 to 12 months.

Activity and exercise

Gradually increase your level of activity. You should avoid impact activity for 3 months. This includes running, jumping and dancing.

You can now progress your exercises.

Stretches



Sit with your leg straight out in front of you. Put a towel or bandage around your foot and pull it towards you.

Feel a stretch in the back of the calf.

Hold for 30 seconds.



Point your toes down as far as they go. Place your other foot on top and apply some pressure.

This will stretch the top of your foot.

Hold for 30 seconds.

Caring for your injury: from week 6

You should no longer be using your boot or crutches.

It's time to progress your exercises and practice your balance:



Stand with your feet as close together as possible.

Hold onto a firm support in safe space. Hold your balance for 30 seconds

Now try removing your hand. Try to keep your balance for 30 seconds



Hold onto a firm support. Put one foot in front of the other, as close together as you can.

Hold this for 30 seconds. If you can, **try to let go of the support and keep your balance.**

Level 2: These exercises are for people who could stand on one leg before their injury.



Hold onto a firm surface in a safe space. Try to stand on one leg.

Hold this for 30 seconds. Stop if you experience pain. When you can do this comfortably, try the next exercise.

Try to stand on one leg without holding on to a support. Try to hold this for 30 seconds. When you can do this comfortably, try the next exercise.

You can try these exercises with your eyes closed. Make sure you are always in a safe environment with a support to hold if needed.

Contact the VFC if you are struggling to recover your movement or return to activity.

Frequently asked questions

It's hard for me to walk in my boot. What do I do?

The boot has a thicker sole than normal shoes. This can make you feel uneven. Make sure you wear a supportive shoe or trainer on your uninjured foot. This will reduce stress on other joints. For more advice, contact the VFC.

I am diabetic. Is it ok for me to wear a boot?

If you are diabetic, please contact us to discuss your boot. This is particularly important if you have problems with your skin or sensation. We may provide you with a specialist diabetic boot.

When can I drive again?

You can return to driving when:

- you are no longer using your boot,
- you can walk comfortably and
- you can perform an emergency stop pain free

Always test how well you can drive in a safe place first.

How can I get a 'fit note' for work?

Ask your GP for a 'fitness for work' statement. You can give this to your employer.

What do I do with my crutches and boot when I no longer need them?

Please return your crutches to the fracture clinic or to A&E. They can be refurbished and reused. Your boot cannot be used again, so you do not need to return it.

Contact the VFC

We're here to help if you've got concerns about your injury, symptoms or exercises.

Call us on 077 7455 5354 (Monday to Friday between 09.00 and 17.00).

Or you can **email** imperial.vfc@nhs.net.

So, please contact us if you:

- have any concerns about your injury or symptoms
- cannot follow this rehabilitation plan
- are expecting an appointment letter and have not received it
- need help with your sling

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service. Staff will be happy to answer your questions. So, if you have **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please talk to a member of staff. Or you can contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**). Call **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday) or email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net

The PALS team will listen to your concerns and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Or, to complain, contact our complaints department:

Call **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Or write to: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team: imperial.communications@nhs.net

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