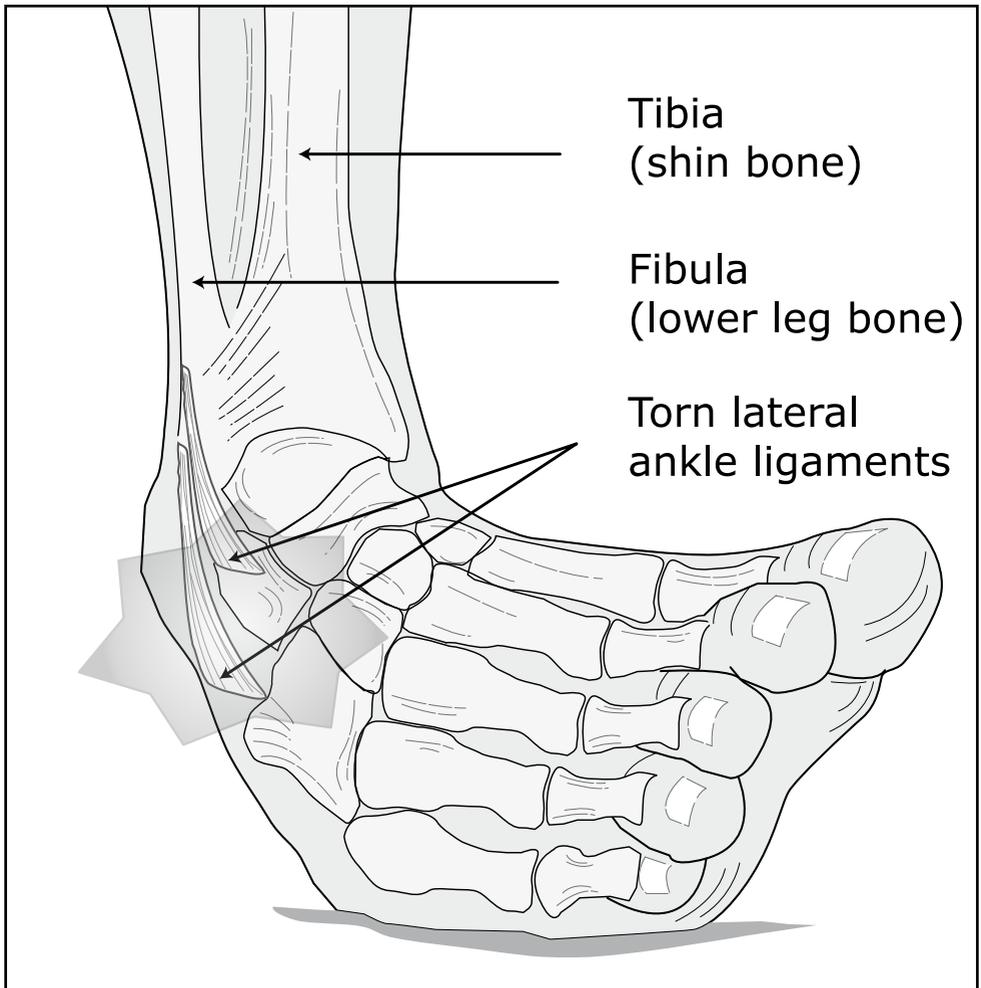


# Ankle sprain advice

Instructions for patients



## What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is a common injury often caused when the ankle is moved through a greater range of movement than normal. This stretches and weakens the ligaments and soft tissues that hold the ankle and foot bones in place.

## What are the symptoms?

- Mild ache to sudden pain
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Inability to move the ankle normally

## How is it treated?

The first treatment is to calm the inflammation and control the swelling and pain. This can be managed with the “**RICE**” treatment.

Early weight bearing (i.e. putting weight on your injured foot) has been shown to help your ankle to heal more quickly. Because of this most people with an acute ankle sprain will not be given crutches, but we will assess each patient individually. Always try to walk normally, i.e. your heel strikes the floor first, rock forward on your foot and then push off with your toes.

<b>R</b>	<b>Rest:</b> Rest will help prevent further injury and allow the healing process to begin. For the first few days, reduce the amount of walking you do and gently exercise the ankle regularly to avoid stiffness. Avoid forceful and strenuous activity such as running and jumping until you can walk without it causing any pain.
<b>I</b>	<b>Ice:</b> Ice can help reduce swelling and reduce pain. Make an ice pack by wrapping a small bag of frozen peas (which you can re-use several times by re-freezing) or some crushed ice cubes in a damp towel. Put the ice pack on your injured ankle for 10 minutes every 2 hours for the first couple of days after the injury. Then use the ice pack 3 times a day until the swelling goes down.
<b>C</b>	<b>Compression:</b> You may have been given an elasticated bandage to support your ankle and help reduce the swelling. If so, you should wear it during the day but leave it off at night. As the pain and symptoms settle, gradually reduce the length of time that you are wearing the bandage. The bandage can be washed and dried overnight. You should find that you no longer need the bandage within 2-3 weeks of the injury.
<b>E</b>	<b>Elevation:</b> Keeping your injured ankle raised above the level of your hips for the first few days after injury. This helps to decrease the swelling and pain.

## Painkillers

You can take painkillers such as paracetamol or a paracetamol / codeine mixture (e.g. co-codamol) as well as anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen. Paracetamol and ibuprofen tablets can be taken together. Please read the dosage instructions on the packets carefully.

## Rehabilitation and recovery

Healing of the ligaments normally takes about six weeks, though everyone recovers from injuries at different rates. Healing time is related to the severity of the injury and any other medical problems that might be present.

As healing gets underway, it is important you begin a series of exercises to help you gain full function of your ankle through improving its flexibility and strength. This will help to reduce the risk of further injury.

## Exercises

1. Draw your foot up as far as possible, with toes pointing towards you. Hold for 5 seconds. Then point your foot away from you as far as possible. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
2. Turn the sole of your foot inwards, keeping your knee still. Hold for 5 seconds. Then turn the sole of your foot outwards, keeping your knee still. Hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
3. Sit on a chair with your feet on the floor. Slide the foot of your injured ankle along the floor behind you, making sure you keep your foot on the floor. Repeat 10 times

4. Sit on a chair and place a towel on the floor. Put the foot of your injured ankle on the towel, with your heel on the edge of it. Using your toes, bunch the towel, and pull it towards you.
5. Sit on a chair, feet flat on the floor. Try to keep your heels directly below your knees if possible. Raise the front parts of your feet off the floor, keeping your heels on the floor. Hold for 5 seconds and then lower. Now raise your heels off the floor, keeping the balls of your feet on the floor. Hold for 5 seconds and then lower. Repeat 10 times.

It will be safe for you to return to normal activity when you have:

- Full strength
- Full range of movement
- Can use your ankle without pain or swelling.

If you have persistent problems with pain, swelling or loss of function, or your ankle is not recovering at the rate you expect, please see your GP.

## How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

**Minor side**

Emergency Department  
John Radcliffe Hospital

**Tel: (01865) 220224**

Or contact your GP.



If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473**. When we receive your call we may transfer you to an interpreter. This can take some time, so please be patient.

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