

# Rehabilitation for ankle sprains

Information for patients



**If any of the advice given makes your symptoms worse or creates a new pain, please stop and seek further help.**

Podiatry telephone number: **0131 536 1627**

## The POLICE principle

Try the POLICE principle at home:

### Protection

During the first few days (48 hours) after an injury, you should rest the injured ankle. After that, you can start gentle movements while still maintaining some protection of the injured area.

### Optimum loading

You can start doing some gentle movement while still protecting the ankle. Encouraging gentle movement of your injured ankle can encourage healing and prevent the joint and muscle from feeling stiff and tight.

### Ice

Applying ice may help reduce the swelling around your injured muscle or joint and can also help reduce pain. Apply to the most painful site for 20 minutes 2-3 times daily (ensure the ice is not applied directly to your skin- a cloth may be a useful barrier).

### Compression

Using a compression bandage, applied evenly to the area, may help to reduce any swelling.

### Elevation

Place the injured ankle on a stack of pillows while you are lying down. Elevate for a few hours every day initially until the swelling is reduced.

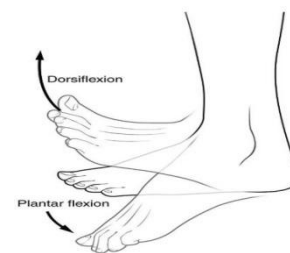
## Mobility and stretching exercises

**Remember:** Start each exercise slowly and use your pain level to guide you in doing these exercises. Ease off the exercise if you have more than mild pain. The following are some examples of typical rehabilitation (rehab) exercises.

Your Podiatrist will advise and carefully tailor a rehab programme for you. These exercises are a guide.

1. Pull the foot up as far as it will go, hold for a couple of seconds and then point to the floor and hold again.

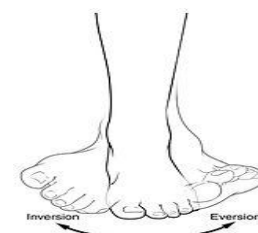
Start with 3 sets of 10 repetitions as many times as possible daily.



2. Trace the alphabet with your toe. This encourages ankle movement in all directions. Trace the alphabet 1 to 3 times per day.

3. Turn your feet so the soles point outwards and then inwards. The movement should be gradual and within the limits of your pain.

Aim for 3 sets of 10 repetitions as many times as possible daily.



## Stretching exercises

### Stretching exercises

Sit with your leg straight in front of you. Place a towel under the ball of your foot, holding the towel at both ends. Pull the towel towards you while keeping your knee straight. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds, and repeat 2-4 times daily.

### Calf stretch

Stand facing a wall with your hands on the wall at about eye level. Put the leg you want to stretch about a step behind your other leg. Keeping your back heel on the floor, bend your front knee until you feel a stretch in the back leg.

Hold the stretch for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 2 to 4 times daily.

Repeat the exercise with the back knee bent a little, still keeping your back heel on the floor. This will stretch a different part of your calf muscle.

## Balance and control exercises

You can usually start balance and control exercises when you are able to stand without pain.

- On a flat surface, stand on your injured ankle. Ensure that your knees are together and level. Maintain this position with your eyes open for approximately 60 seconds. Repeat as many times as possible on both feet. Stand next to a wall or a steady surface to hold onto if needed.
- Once this becomes too easy, this exercise can be repeated with your eyes closed. (Your podiatrist will advise you on this)
- Progress this exercise further by using a wobble board to balance. (Your podiatrist will advise you on this)
- Draw a line on the floor with tape and stand on one side of the line on one foot. Hop from one side of the line to the other and back again. On landing, stay balancing on one leg for 2 seconds before hopping again. Do 3 sets of 8 repetitions.

## Strength exercises

- Using a Therapy band, wrap it around the outside of your foot and tie to a stationary object with tension so that your foot is pulled towards the midline of your body. Keeping your heel against the ground, pull your foot outwards against the resistance band. Slowly return to your start position. Do 3 sets of 8 repetitions, twice daily
- Wrap the therapy band around the inside of your foot and tie to a stationary object with tension so that your foot is pulled away from the midline of your body. Pull your foot towards the midline of your body and slowly return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 8 repetitions twice daily.

## Useful websites

- [www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/self-management-advice/ankle-problems](http://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/self-management-advice/ankle-problems)
- [www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/conditions/foot-and-ankle-pain/](http://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/conditions/foot-and-ankle-pain/)
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