

Musculoskeletal conditions of the foot and ankle

Information and self-management guide for patients



You have been given this information leaflet to help you understand more about the problems you are having and to provide some advice on what you can do to help your symptoms.

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

Podiatry Telephone number: **0131 536 1627**

What is a musculoskeletal condition?

A musculoskeletal (MSK) condition is an injury or pain in any of the following body parts: bones, muscles, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, joints, skin and connective tissues. These make up the MSK system which controls your movement.

Causes of a musculoskeletal condition

Some of the most common causes of MSK pain are as follows:

- Wearing ill-fitting or badly styled footwear (such as high heels, hard thin soles or soles that are too soft)
- Being overweight
- If you have recently started being more active/increased your activity level
- Activities/occupations that involve placing large amounts of pressure and or strain on your foot and ankle (such as running or jumping)
- Tight or weak muscles in your lower leg and or foot
- Injury to your lower leg, ankle, or foot
- Foot deformity
- Arthritis in the foot or ankle
- Some underlying medical conditions.

When to speak to a health professional urgently

You should seek medical help urgently if you:

- Have developed a misshapen foot or ankle
- Are unable to put weight on your foot
- Your calf is hot, red, swollen and tender.

What can I do to help myself?

It is important to try to work out what leads to your pain. Avoiding the causes or triggers of painful symptoms is one of the most important parts of helping your recovery.

Consider the following options:

Footwear

The shoe style you wear should accommodate the width and shape of your foot and have semi rigid soles- avoid narrow, pointed shoes. The heel height should be between 1cm and 4 cm and preferably have a firm fastening such as lacing.

Modify activity levels

It is good to keep moving and exercising but you may benefit from considering alternative ways of keeping active temporarily. Lower impact activities (such as cycling or swimming) may be a good option for you. If this does not help a period of rest may be suitable.

Ice packs

Apply an ice pack to the painful site for 20 minutes 2-3 times daily (ensure the ice is not applied directly to your skin- a cloth or towel may be a useful barrier).

Aim for a healthy body weight

Being overweight increases pressure and strain to the affected area and could reduce your chances of successful resolution. If you need support with this please speak with your GP or the Get Moving service.

Pain medication

Some pain medication may help to reduce your symptoms and help you to move more comfortably. Discuss this with your Pharmacist or GP.

Being patient

This is not always easy but we know it may take time for your symptoms to settle.

Exercises

Please see back page of this leaflet.

What if my symptoms fail to resolve?

MSK conditions often settle with time. However, if after 6 weeks of following the advice in this leaflet, your problem has not improved, seek advice from a health professional.

Exercises



Calf stretch:

Keep your back foot on the ground, toes pointing forward and knee straight. Lean forward until a stretch is felt in the calf.

Hold still for 20-30 seconds if comfortable. Repeat 3 -4 times daily.



Heel raise:

Slowly rise onto your tip toes.

Hold for 5 seconds.

Take 5 seconds to lower your heels to the ground.

Repeat as many times as you can to complete 1 set. Stop when you are too tired or limited by pain. Do 2-3 sets every 2nd day.



Balance:

On a flat surface stand on the leg that is to be strengthened. Keep this position for approximately 30 seconds and repeat 2-3 times per day.

You should do this exercise close to a wall or a stable surface to hold on to if needed.

Useful Apps

NHS 24 MSK help

Useful web links

For further exercises and information

- www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/muscle-bone-and-joints/exercises/exercises-for-foot-problems
- <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-footsteps-v2.pdf>
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F5Sly9JQao&feature=emb_logo
- www.edinburghleisure.co.uk/get-moving

