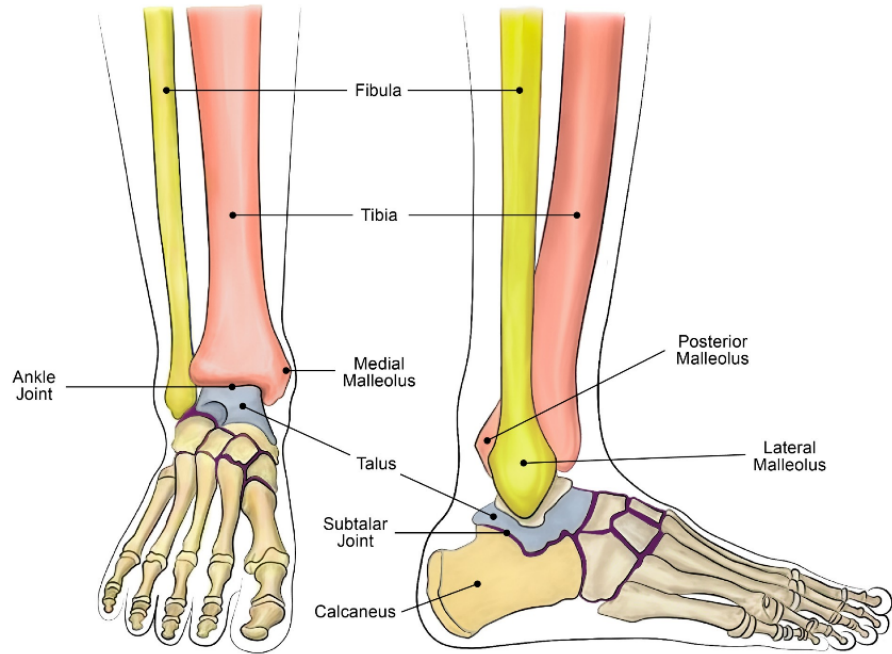


What is Ankle Arthritis?

Arthritis occurs when the cartilage—the smooth, protective layer at the ends of bones, becomes worn or damaged. When this happens, the joint may become painful, stiff and/or swollen. In some cases, extra bone growths called osteophytes (or bone spurs) can form.

The ankle joint is made up of the shinbone (tibia) and ankle bone (talus). It works like a hinge, allowing your ankle move up and down.

Ankle arthritis can make the joint stiff and harder to move. When the ankle doesn't move as well and is painful, everyday activities such as walking can be more difficult.



How is it diagnosed?

A healthcare professional will examine your foot and ankle for pain, swelling and function. Standing ankle X-rays are often used to help confirm the diagnosis.

What are symptoms?

- Pain at the ankle joint.
- Pain that increases with walking, activity and/or towards the end of the day
- Swelling around the ankle.
- Stiffness at the joint, particularly in the morning or after a period of rest
- Reduced movement at the ankle joint.
- A feeling that the ankle may give way.

What are causes/risk factors?

- Previous injuries to ankle
- Previous fractures
- Modified foot mechanics, ie flat feet
- High BMI
- No known cause in some cases.

How can you manage ankle arthritis?

Non-Operative management:

- Physiotherapy can provide exercises that focus on strengthening the muscles around the foot and ankle to support the joint and help with the pain.
- Podiatry, which may include advice on insoles and suitable footwear.
- Pain-relief options, such as topical gels or medication that help reduce discomfort.
- Keeping to a healthy weight, which can reduce pressure on the foot and ankle.
- Supportive footwear or trainers to help improve comfort and stability.
- Staying active is important, but you may need to reduce high impact activities if they make your symptoms worse.
- Using an ankle support may help reduced pain and improve confidence when walking.
- Hot or cold packs to help ease pain and stiffness.
- Walking aids, for example a walking stick to make moving around easier.
- Steroid injection which may be considered to help reduce pain and swelling.

Do I need surgery?

In advanced cases of ankle joint arthritis, surgery may be considered when symptoms significantly affect your quality of life and have not improved with non-surgical treatments.

There are two potential operations – *ankle joint replacement* or *an ankle joint fusion*. Both can have improve pain and function. The decision as to which one is best for the patient depends on many factors including age, clinical assessment and radiological changes.