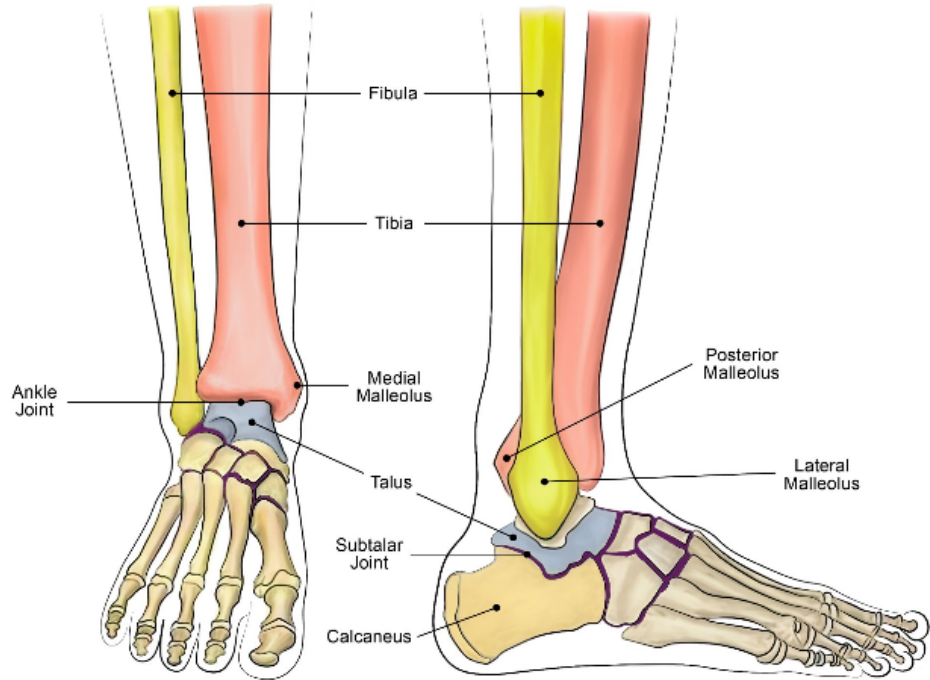


## What is subtalar arthritis?

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 subtalar joint is made up of the ankle bone (talus) and your heel bone (calcaneum). This joint allows your foot to turn from side to side.



When arthritis affects your subtalar joint, it can reduce how well the joint moves. This reduced movement, along with pain can make walking more difficult.

## How is it diagnosed?

A healthcare professional will examine your foot and ankle for pain, swelling and function. Standing ankle XRs can confirm the diagnosis.

## What are the symptoms?

- Pain below the ankle, it can be on the outside or inside of the heel/foot.
- Pain may increase with walking, particularly on uneven ground and/or at the end of the day
- Swelling at the joint
- Stiffness, particularly in the morning or after a period of rest
- The shape and position of the foot and ankle can change.

## What are the causes/risk factors?

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- Previous injuries to ankle
- Previous fractures
- Modified foot mechanics, i.e. flat feet/PTTD
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- High BMI.

## How can you manage subtalar arthritis?

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### Non-Operative management:

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

## Do I need surgery?

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In advanced cases of subtalar joint arthritis, surgery may be considered when symptoms significantly affect your quality of life and have not improved with non-surgical treatments. The procedure typically involves fusing the affected joints. This can help to reduce pain and improve function.

Surgery can help reduce pain and improve day-to-day function. Recovery takes time and often includes a period in a cast, followed by time in a supportive boot.