

Emergency Department

Ankle sprain and flake fractures

Information for patients



What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is an injury to the ligaments of the ankle joint. These are elastic-band-like structures which hold the bones of the ankle joint together and prevent excess twisting and turning.

These ligaments normally stretch slightly and then retract back to their normal shape and size. A sprain occurs when these ligaments have been stretched beyond their limits. In a severe sprain, these ligaments may be partially or completely torn.

Avulsion fracture

Sometimes a small section or flake of bone can be pulled off where the ligaments attach to the bone. These are minor fractures or breaks and are stable, so you won't need a plaster cast, but you might be given a supportive splint. They are treated in the same way as a sprain.

These tears/small flake fractures may take several weeks to heal completely and you may have pain and swelling for up to three weeks. You may notice this more in the evening, after a lot of walking. These symptoms will get better with time and healing will take place more rapidly if you follow this advice.

Management of your injury

Painkillers

Take regular painkillers, to help you move more easily and gently exercise your injured limb. Paracetamol is ideal. If paracetamol does not help, you may need a stronger painkiller, such as codeine. Codeine is only available on prescription; however you can buy a combination of paracetamol with codeine over the counter of any pharmacy. Please speak to the pharmacist for extra advice.

Please read and follow the dosage instructions on the packet carefully. If you require a stronger pain relief, please contact your own GP for a prescription.

Rest

Rest your injured limb for the next 24 - 48 hours, with your foot elevated (raised up). Continue to gently move your injured ankle, to prevent stiffness.

Ice

You can apply ice to your ankle for up to 20 minutes every two hours, for the first 24 - 48 hours. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel is ideal. Do not apply ice directly to your skin, as this may cause a cold burn.

Elevation

Your leg should be elevated while resting, to help reduce the swelling. This means that your ankle should be at a higher level than your heart. Avoid having long periods of time when your leg is not rested.

The use of compression bandages to reduce swelling is not recommended.

Exercises

It is important to move your ankle and to start walking normally (without a limp) as soon as you are able. Wear flat shoes that support your foot and be careful on uneven ground. Exercises will strengthen the muscles around your ankle, providing added support to the joint. A leaflet explaining these exercises is available.

Feedback

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. If you have any comments, concerns, or complaints about your experience of our service, please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service.

John Radcliffe Hospital

PALS Office
Level 2, Main entrance
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Headley Way
Headington
Oxford OX3 9DU

Tel: 01865 221 473

Email: PALS@ouh.nhs.uk

Horton General Hospital

PALS Office
Horton General Hospital
Oxford Road
Banbury, OX16 9AL

Tel: 01295 229 259

Email: PALS@ouh.nhs.uk

How to contact us

If you continue to have pain eight weeks after your injury, despite taking regular painkillers and caring for your injury as advised, or if at any point you are worried your injury is not healing, please contact the New Patient Clinic for an appointment.

New Patient (Fracture) Clinic at:

John Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford

Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm

Saturday and Sunday, 9.00am to 11.00am

Tel: **01865 220 217**

OR

Horton General Hospital, Banbury

Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 11.00am

Tel: **01295 229 606**

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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