

## About sprained ankle

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### What does a sprained ankle mean?

A sprained ankle occurs when the foot or ankle is forced inwards or outwards past its normal range of motion. This may result in some of the ligaments, which surround and support the ankle, being stretched or torn. There will be tenderness around the injury and pain will be made worse by movements and walking. It may take around six weeks to fully recover.

### What to expect

For the first and second week, you may have pain when you walk. It is normal for the ankle to swell up either immediately or later. Bruising may appear after a few days. The swelling and bruising may last several weeks. This is normal and nothing to worry about. If you are unable to put any weight on your ankle, you will be given crutches.

### How do I help the ankle sprain to heal?

It is very important to put weight on the foot as soon as the severe pain is easing, as this helps with healing. This will be quite painful at first, as the tissues will feel very tight. You will also find it more painful first thing in the morning and after resting the ankle for a long time.

### How can I reduce the swelling?

When you are not on your feet, you should sit with your feet up on a cushion, so that the ankle is higher than the hip. This allows the swelling to drain away. Over the first two to three days, place an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas on the ankle for 10–15 minutes, four times a day. Before doing this, cover the ankle with a damp cloth or tea towel so that you do not burn the skin.

### Will exercises help?

Yes. The muscles and ligaments around the ankle need to be strengthened after an injury. You also need to re-stimulate the nerves that co-ordinate balance to avoid injuring the ankle again.

## Why didn't I have an x-ray?

Clinical research on thousands of patients has shown which findings on examination, safely exclude a broken bone. If x-rays were not ordered for you, this is because the findings of your examination fell into this category.

## Exercises

1. As soon as you get home, you should do the following **ankle exercises four times a day for two minutes each**. Carry on with them until the ankle movement has returned to normal.

While sitting on a comfortable chair with the ankle elevated.

- Move your foot up and down 20 times
- Turn your foot inward and outwards in a twisting motion 20 times
- Make 20 circles with your foot in each direction

2. As soon as the symptoms allow and the pain has settled, you should do the following **balance exercise four times a day for a further week**.

Stand on your injured foot, take the weight off the non-injured foot, hold the knee slightly bent and try to keep your balance for 30 seconds.

## Follow up

**You are advised to come back to the Emergency Department if:**

- Your pain or ability to walk suddenly becomes worse
- Your ankle does not seem to be making any improvement

## Further information

If you have any other concerns about your ankle, please contact your GP or the Emergency Department on **01271 322480**.

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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