



Ankle and foot sprain / injury: aftercare advice

Information for patients from the Emergency Department

Please speak to a healthcare professional before following the advice below

You have come to hospital with an injury to your ankle and / or foot. This leaflet will explain how you can care for your injury at home.

Sprains to ligaments (tough, flexible tissue, which hold your bones together) are very common. The injury has caused bruising and swelling of the affected ankle and / or foot.

Will I need an x-ray?

An x-ray may or may not have been needed to assess your injury fully. The doctor / nurse will have decided on this following their assessment of your injury.

Will it hurt for long?

The pain and discomfort may continue for six to eight weeks after your injury, but should steadily improve over time. If the pain continues or gets worse at any time, contact your GP or nearest Urgent Treatment Centre for advice.

What treatment will I be given?

- Take **painkillers** (such as paracetamol) as prescribed for the first few days, if you feel you need help with pain.
Ibuprofen should not be taken in the first 48 hours following your injury, as it slows healing. It can be taken after 24 hours for severe pain only.
- **Raise (elevate) your injured leg** to reduce swelling. Keep your foot well up above the level of your bottom and rest your leg on a pillow when you go to bed. Continue to do this for 48 hours or until your pain and swelling settles.

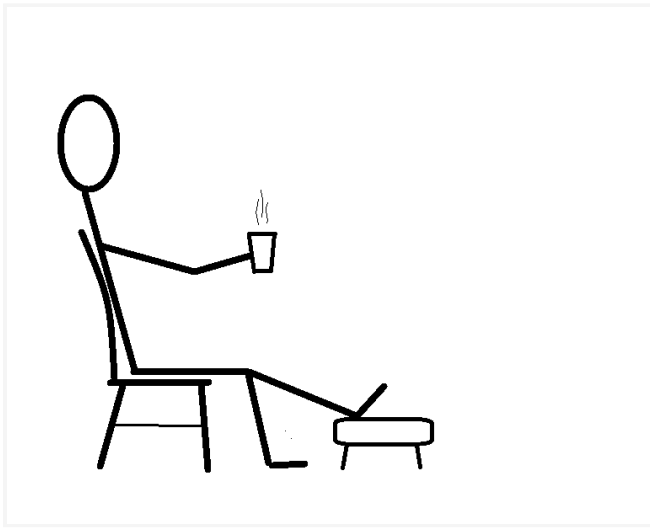


Diagram showing poor elevation

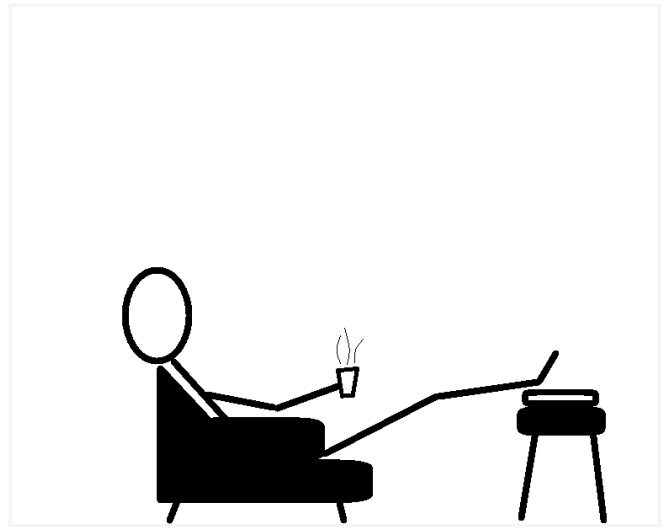


Diagram showing good elevation

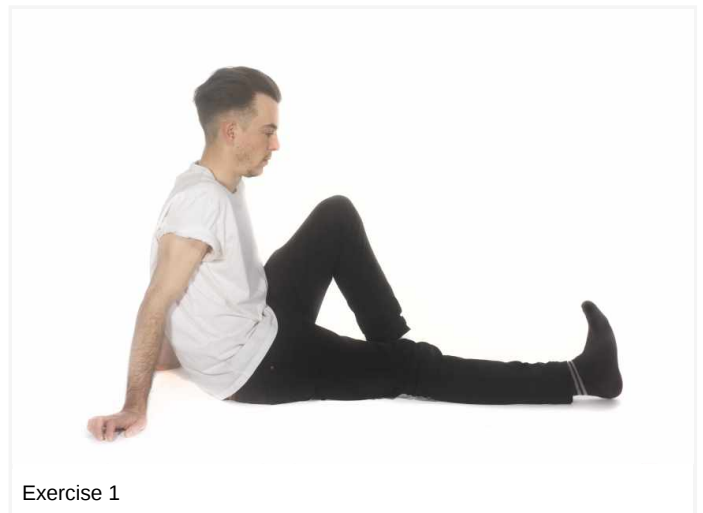
- You can **use ice** (or a cold flannel) to ease the pain, by wrapping crushed ice in a damp towel and placing it over your injury. Leave the ice in place for 10 to 15 minutes, then remove. Do this every two to four hours during the day, for at least three days.

Caution: ice can cause burns, so do not put it directly on your skin, always use a towel. Protect sensitive skin with baby oil.

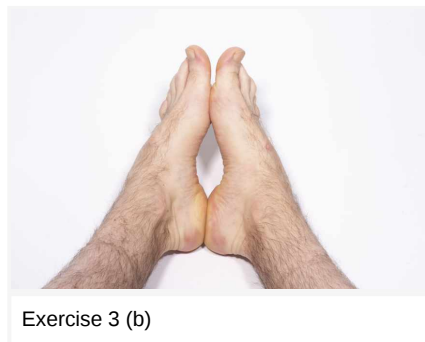
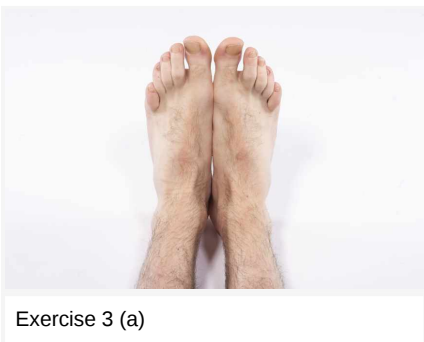
Contrast baths are also very helpful in reducing the swelling and discomfort. For more information, ask a member of staff for the Trust's **Contrast bathing and exercises** leaflet.

- Minor sprains are best treated by **gentle exercise** to prevent stiffness. Do the following exercises every hour for 10 minutes, especially after ice treatment. If you hold your ankle stiff in an awkward position, it will become more difficult to move it afterwards as it will stiffen up.

1. Point your foot up towards you, then point it down again.
2. Circle your ankle keeping your knee straight.
3. Keep your ankles together (a). Turn the soles of your feet towards (b), and then away from each other (c).



Exercise 1



- Other than the recommended exercises, you should **rest** for the first 24 hours after your injury. After 24 hours try to walk with even strides (heel first, then toe) and try to avoid limping. Put as much weight on your foot as your pain allows.
- **Wear sensible shoes** (trainers or supported shoes) and avoid standing still.

Avoid the following for the first three days following your injury

- **Heat** such as hot water bottles and heat pads.
- **Alcohol** as this will increase bleeding and swelling.
- **Running** or any exercise.
- **Massage** as this may increase bleeding and swelling.

If your pain increases or the swelling gets worse, return to your GP for advice.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals website (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/information-for-patients/patient-information/>).

Reference number: Web 392

First published:
December 2017

Last reviewed:
June 2023

Next review date:
October 2026



Illustrations and Photographs created by the Medical Photography Department.

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.