

Foot and Ankle pain

Physiotherapy & Occupational Therapy

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Introduction

Most of us will experience foot and ankle pain at some point. Although it can be painful, it is rarely due to a serious cause. For most people foot and ankle pain normally resolves within six to 12 weeks without any treatment.

Common causes

A number of factors have been associated with foot and ankle pain. These include:

- A sprain, strain or fall
- A sudden increase or decrease in your normal activity or exercise levels
- Muscle weakness
- Following a period of increased stress, worry or low mood
- Following a period of poor sleep, fatigue or feeling run down
- Other lifestyle factors such as being overweight and smoking
- A flare up of longstanding foot and ankle pain
- Other conditions

Common symptoms

These include:

- Pain
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Feeling of weakness
- Feeling of instability

You may experience constant or intermittent (come and go) symptoms, that are aggravated by certain activities and reduced by others.

What can I do to help it?

- In the first few days after an onset of foot and ankle pain, changing or reducing your usual activities may help. However, there is strong evidence that keeping active and gradually returning to all your usual activities and exercise will help you recover
- It is normal to experience some pain during your recovery, but it does not mean you are damaging your foot or ankle
- Try to stay at work or return as soon as you are able. Your employer, GP or health practitioner will be able to advise on how to return to your normal work duties
- Try some of these self-help tips to aid your recovery:
- After a foot and ankle sprain a short period of rest (48 hours), foot elevation and using an ice pack (for up to 15 minutes) may be enough to ease your symptoms. **Never apply heat or ice directly to the skin**
- For foot and ankle pain (without a sprain or strain) apply a heat or icepack (whichever you find most useful) to the painful area – for up to 15 minutes
- A short course of simple pain medication as advised by your pharmacist or GP may help reduce pain and allow you to move more comfortably
- Keep moving. Regular movement and exercise is safe and helpful for foot and ankle pain. It is important to build up gradually – the exercise or activity you enjoy most, is likely to help your recovery
- Wearing cushioned footwear for example, trainers can take some pressure off the foot and ankle
- Try and get a good night's sleep for example, place your foot on a pillow
- Good sleep habits and managing stress may help you cope better with your pain

Facts About Foot And Ankle Pain

- Foot and ankle pain is common WITHOUT any damage to your joints, ligaments or tendons
- X-rays and scans often DO NOT show the cause of your pain
- Movement and exercise is NOT harmful for foot and ankle joints
- Your foot and ankle can become stronger and healthier with regular movement and exercise – that is built up gradually
- Creaking and clicking foot and ankle joints are common in people WITHOUT pain. It is a rarely a sign of harm or damage
- If you are overweight - losing weight by getting more active and improving your diet can improve your foot and ankle pain by reducing inflammation in your body and the load on your joints
- Improving your sleep and general health are all also important for your foot and ankle pain

When should I seek medical advice?

Call your GP surgery if

- Your pain is getting worse
- You have tried the self-help tips for three to four weeks and the symptoms have not improved

Seek immediate medical advice if

- After a fall, sprain, strain or twisting injury
 - Your foot or ankle is misshapen and swollen
 - You are unable to stand or walk on it
- Your calf is red, hot, swollen and tender
- You have a fever and your foot or ankle is hot, red, swollen and painful
- You are a diabetic and have an open wound, ulcer or a hot swollen foot

Do I need an X-ray or scan?

- X-rays or scans are NOT usually required to diagnose foot and ankle pain
- X-rays or scans are NOT able to tell us how much pain you are experiencing
- X-rays and scans often show joint narrowing and osteoarthritis which are common in people WITHOUT foot and ankle pain. These findings are unlikely to change the way you manage your pain
- X-rays and scans are best used where a serious injury (for example, a broken bone) or conditions such as cancer or infection are suspected

Why exercise?

It is important to get the foot or ankle moving early in order to gain mobility, strength and return to normal function. Early exercise can have a positive influence on tissue healing and reduce the potential for joint and soft tissue stiffness.

Foot / ankle exercises

These are suggested exercises and are to be performed within comfortable limits. If you have any concerns about any of the exercises, please seek medical advice.

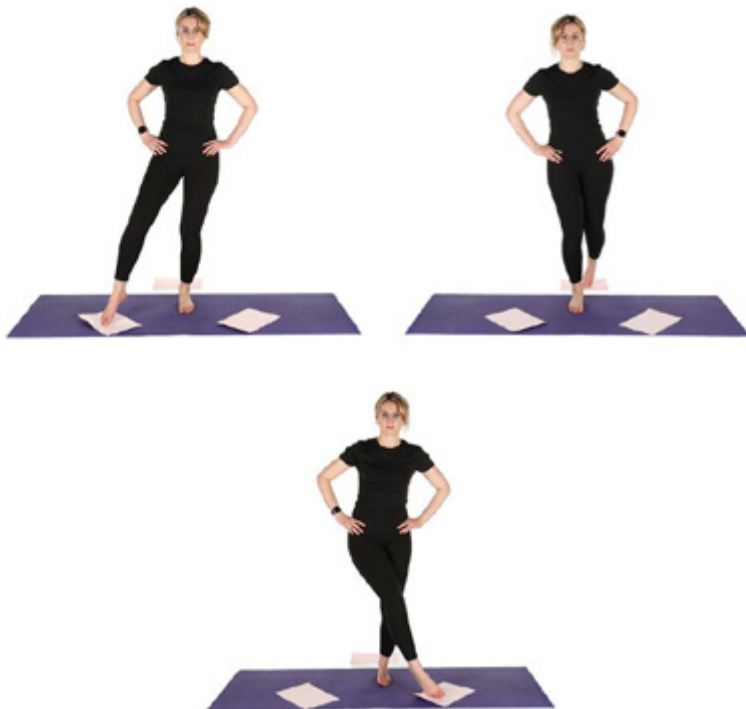
1. Sit with the legs outstretched and the back supported. Place a pillow under the calf with the foot and ankle over the edge or, if comfortable you can perform the exercise without the pillow. Actively pull the foot back bending at the ankle as far as it will go then point the toes down as far as they will go. Make the movement brisk. Repeat for one to two minutes, twice per day.



2. Sit in the same position as exercise one to start. Move the foot inward and outward moving at the ankle forefoot. Work to the end of the range of movement in both directions. Repeat for one to two minutes, twice per day.



3. Place a few pieces of paper on the floor around your body. Stand on one leg and gain your balance. Try to maintain your balance whilst reaching to the pieces of paper with the other leg moving to one then the other. Try working both in front and behind your body. Repeat one to two minutes, twice per day.



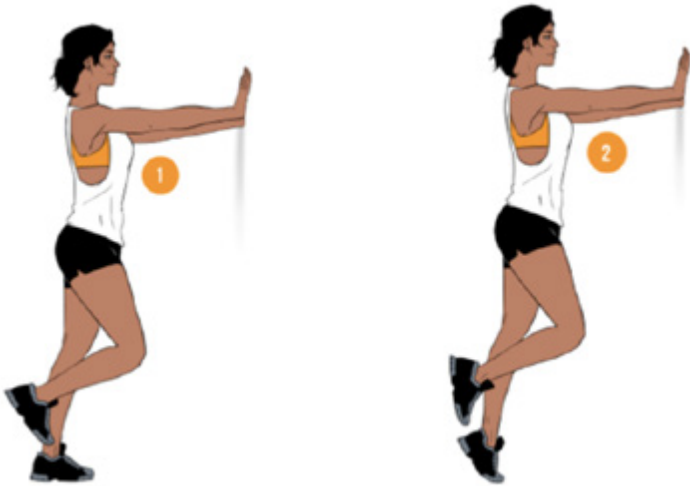
4. Stand at a wall or counter top, with one foot forward and one back. Keep the toes pointing forwards throughout. Bend the front knee and gently push the hips forward, keeping the back knee straight. You will feel a stretch in the calf of the back leg. Hold the stretch for 20 seconds. Repeat two to three times, twice per day. Take the stretch to the end of the range but never force it.



5. Stand at a wall or counter top to rest the hands for balance. Stand with the feet hip distance apart. Push through the feet to lift the heels off the floor. Try not to take the weight through the hands. Lower the heels. Repeat 10 times, twice per day.



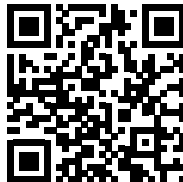
6. Stand at a wall or counter top and rest the hands for balance. Take one leg off the floor, push through the other foot to lift the heel off the floor. Try not to take the weight through the hands. Lower the heel in control. Repeat 10 times, twice per day.



Gradually

- Return to your normal activities
- Resume hobbies and sports

If you are unsure of when to progress your exercises, or you have any concerns about your injury please use the PHIO self-referral platform or scan the QR code below.



Do I need a fit note?

- If you're off work sick for seven days or less, your employer will normally ask you to complete a self-certificate for sick leave as soon as you return to work
- If you're off work sick for more than seven days your employer will normally ask for a fit note (or Statement of Fitness for Work) from your GP or hospital doctor.
- You can read more information here <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/caring-carers-and-long-term-conditions/when-do-i-need-a-fit-note/>

Useful websites and resources

- What should you know about joint health? What Should You Know About Joint Health? <https://bodylogic.physio/what-should-you-know-about-joint-health/>
- Plantar fasciopathy <https://www.sirona-cic.org.uk/advice-information/leaflet-library/leaflet-plantar-fasciopathy-a-guide-for-patients-and-gps/>

Accessing information and support to make healthy lifestyle choices

Online support:

Exercise

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/?tabname=exercise-tips>
- <https://www.nhs.uk>conditions>nhs-fitness-studio>

Sleep

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/>

Diet

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan/>

Emotional well being

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਆਲੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。