

# Ankle sprains

## Advice and treatment

Ankle sprains are a common injury, particularly with some exercises like running.

It's an injury to the ankle which normally involves rolling the foot inwards or outwards in excess of your normal movement.

In most cases the ligaments on the outside of the ankle will be injured.

## Signs and symptoms

Typically, symptoms of ankle sprains include:

- Tender or painful to touch
- Reduced range of movement of the ankle due to pain, swelling and stiffness
- Varying degrees of swelling on the outside and/or inside of the ankle
- Varying degrees of bruising on the outside and/or inside of the ankle or foot
- Walking with a limp



## Treating ankle sprains

Follow the **P.O.L.I.C.E.** approach in the first 48-72 hours

- **Protection** – Rest the injured area. When ready, you can start gentle motion while protecting the area. You may need an assistive device, like crutches, to walk in the short term
- **Optimal Loading** – Doing gentle progressive movements after your injury can promote optimal healing, and prevent delays in returning to normal due to joint and muscle tightness or atrophy
- **Ice the area** – Wrap a bag of frozen peas in a damp towel and apply to the area for 15-20 minutes at a time, every 2-3 hours
- **Compress the area** – With a simple elastic bandage or elasticated tubular bandage, which should be snug but not tight
- **Elevate your foot whilst resting** – Ideally at least to the same level as your hip

## Exercises

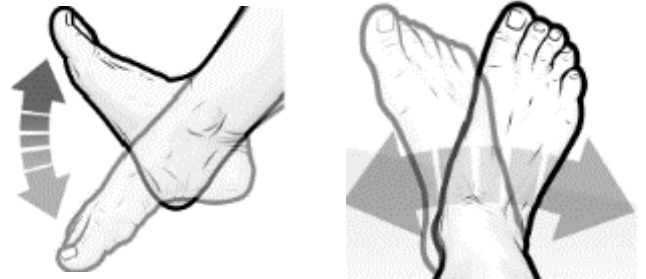
As your pain levels improve, you can follow the following exercises gradually, to increase the movement and strength of your ankle.

If your symptoms continue, please speak to your GP who may refer you to a physiotherapist. The following exercises can help improve the mobility, strength and stability of your ankle as part of your rehabilitation.

### Ankle Pump/ Inversion and Eversion

Point your foot away from you and pull it back towards you in a smooth, rhythmical manner. Also Slowly turn the sole of your foot inwards as far as you can, then outwards as far as you can.

Repeat 15-20 times, three times a day.



### Gastrocnemius stretch with a towel

Sit with your legs out straight, grasp a towel in both hands and loop the middle of the towel over the foot of the leg to be stretched.

Place a pillow under the knee.

Gently pull the ends of the towel towards you until you feel a stretch in your calf.

Hold for 30 secs, repeat 2-3 times at a time, 2-3 times a day.



### Calf stretch on step

With the ball of your foot on the edge of a step and your knee straight, slowly drop your heel down until you feel a stretch in your calf.

Hold for 30 seconds, repeat three times.



### Single leg balance

Balance on one leg, without support if you can. As you improve, try closing your eyes.

Change the surface under the foot to pillow or wobble cushion.

Aim to hold until failure or as pain allows, 4-5 times a day.



### Double leg heel raise

Standing behind a chair for support (1), slowly rise up onto your toes as far as you can (2). Slowly lower and repeat.

Progress to performing on one leg as pain and mobility allows.

Aim to perform 15-20, two to three times a day.

---

Medication such as painkillers can be taken to help ease the pain and inflammation but please ask your GP or pharmacist for advice if you're unsure.

You can find out more about ankle and other sprains – including causes, symptoms and treatment suggestions – from the NHS website

Visit the NHS website [nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/)

This leaflet is intended to support the advice you've received from your GP and Physiotherapist. Please contact them if you have any further questions.

The exercise diagrams have been created by The Rehab Lab.

Visit Rehab Lab website [TheRehabLab.com/](https://www.TheRehabLab.com/)

## How to contact us

Visit our webpage [berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy](https://berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/physiotherapy)

**East Berkshire: Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, Ascot, Bracknell**

Call [0300 365 5678](tel:03003655678)

Email [mksphysioadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:mksphysioadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk)

**West Berkshire: Wokingham, Newbury, Reading**

Call [0118 9041 777](tel:01189041777)

Email [admin.rdgphysio@berkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:admin.rdgphysio@berkshire.nhs.uk)

