

# Ankle exercises

## Information and advice



Leicestershire  
Partnership NHS Trust  
Riverside House  
Bridge Park Plaza  
Bridge Park Road  
Thurmaston  
Leicester  
LE4 8PQ

## Rehabilitation of your injured ankle

---

Rehabilitation of the injured ankle is important in strengthening the muscles that support the joint and in helping to prevent repeated ankle sprains. After the injury the muscles around the joint become weak. This reduces the control and stability of the joint and may increase the risk of further injury. It is therefore important during rehabilitation to retrain and improve the balance and stability in your ankle.

Exercises should begin as early as possible to prevent stiffness, reduce pain and swelling and maintain function. The exercises in this booklet are divided into three phases and should be done depending on the advice you have been given by your physiotherapist, your symptoms and the time since injury.

## Swelling

---

If swelling is present in your ankle the following may help to reduce it:

**Ice** Place an oil on your skin e.g. baby oil and then wrap an ice pack e.g. frozen peas in a damp towel and place on your ankle. Leave in place for 15—20 minutes. Initially use every two—three hours and use less often as the swelling reduces.

**Do not use if you have circulation problems, Raynaud's Disease or other reaction to cold.**

**Elevation** Keep your foot elevated as much as possible to help drain the fluid from your ankle.

**Compression** A bandage or tubigrip applied to your ankle can provide compression to help reduce the swelling. Do not apply a bandage or tubigrip too tightly. Remove immediately if pins and needles, numbness or a change of colour in the toes occurs.

## Phase one: early exercises

These exercises help to reduce pain and stiffness and maintain range of movement.

### Ankle plantar and dorsiflexion

Pull your toes up towards you as far as possible and then push them away.



Repeat  times.

## □ Ankle rotation

Slowly rotate your ankle in a circle.

Gradually increase the size of the circle.



Repeat for  seconds.

Change direction.

## □ Ankle rotation

Using your ankle and foot only, trace the letters of the alphabet from A-Z.



## Phase two: intermediate exercises

These exercises help increase the range of movement in your ankle.

### Active-assisted dorsiflexion

Sit with one leg straight out in front of you. Put a band/towel around your foot.

Gently pull the band/towel to help move your ankle further.

Hold for  seconds.

Repeat  times.



### Calf stretch 1

Hold on to a wall or chair for support. Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you.

Keeping your back heel on the floor, lean your body forwards and down until a stretch can be felt in the straight leg.

Hold for  seconds.

Repeat  times.



## Ankle dorsiflexion

Sitting in a chair, raise your toes off the floor keeping your heels on the floor.

Repeat  times.



## Ankle plantarflexion

Sitting in a chair, raise your heels off the floor keeping your toes on the ground (tip-toes).

Repeat  times.



## Inversion/eversion

Sitting with your foot on the floor, alternately raise:

- A) the inner border of your foot (big toe) and then
- B) the outer border (little toe).



Repeat  times.

## Band exercises

### Ankle eversion

Sit on the floor or on a chair. Put a rubber exercise band around your foot.

Turn your little toes outwards as if you want to look at the sole of your foot. Try to keep your knee still and move only from the ankle.



Repeat  times.

## Ankle inversion

Sit on the floor or on a chair. Put a rubber exercise band around your foot.

Turn your big toe inwards as if you want to look at the sole of your foot.

Repeat  times.



## Ankle plantarflexion

Sit on the floor or on a chair. Put a rubber exercise band around your foot.

Push into the band with the ball of the foot, pointing your toes towards the floor.

Slowly return to the starting position.

Repeat  times.





## Phase three: advanced exercises restoring function

These exercises help retain and improve the balance and stability in your ankle and will help you return to normal activities.

### Calf raises

Stand holding a chair or wall for support. Push up on your toes.

Repeat  times.



### Calf raises: single leg

As the above exercise but stand only on the affected leg and hold a support. Push up on your toes.

Repeat  times.

### Rise and rock

Stand with your feet apart and hold a support.

Rise up onto your toes then rock back onto your heels.

Repeat  times.



## Calf stretch 2

Stand with the leg to be stretched behind the other leg.

Push your heel down while bending the back knee.

Hold for  seconds.

Repeat  times.



## Tip-toe walking

Walk on your toes.

For  seconds.



## Calf raise over step

Stand on both feet on a step with both of your heels over the edge.

Let your heels drop downwards. Push up on your toes.

Repeat  times.



## Balance exercise 1

Stand with one foot directly in front of the other as if you are standing on a tightrope.

Try to balance with your eyes closed.

For  seconds.

Repeat with the other leg at the front.



## Balance exercise 2

Stand on affected leg.

Try to balance with your eyes open.

For  seconds.



## Balance exercise 3

Stand on one leg.

Try to balance with your eyes closed for  seconds.

# Notes

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.

Date implemented: February 2016  
Last reviewed: November 2017  
Review date: November 2019  
Leaflet No. 474 - Edition 2