



West Berkshire Physiotherapy Service Leaflet 6 Ankle Sprain

Following your injury, your ankle may be painful and swollen and you might be having difficulty walking. If you follow the advice given on this sheet, it will speed up your recovery and minimise future problems.

Initially you should follow the PRICE regime – **P**rotection, **R**est, **I**ce, **C**ompression and **E**levation. You should continue with this until the swelling goes down.

Protection

It is important to use any supports that may have been given to you, such as crutches, slings or compression bandages. It is not necessary to completely avoid moving the ankle; in fact gentle exercise will be beneficial.

Rest

For the first few days after injury, particularly the first 48 hours, it may help to restrict your normal activities, particularly those involving stress being placed on the ankle or movements that cause or increase pain, such as weight-bearing through the foot/ankle.

Although the ankle should be rested during the early stages, the joints above and below should still be moved. As you start to feel better, gradually move the affected part more and gradually start to take more weight when you walk.

Ice

Use ice to reduce the swelling/bruising/muscle spasm and pain. Plain ice and especially anything from a freezer should not be applied directly to the skin but wrapped in a towel or tea towel. The optimum regime is to apply ice for 20 minutes, remove it for 10 minutes and repeat the process over 2 hours. Ice should not be applied for more than 30 minutes without a break for fear of "ice burns".

Compression

For the first 72 hours use an elastic bandage or tubigrip to apply compression to the ankle. This compression should be a minimum of six inches above and below the site of injury, making sure that even pressure is felt throughout. Replace the compression after 24 hours and continue for at least 72 hours. Check the area below the injured site for coldness/pallor which may suggest that the compression is too tight.

Remove the compression whilst lying down. Do not apply compression if you have any problems with your circulation or if you have had a recent thrombosis.

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Elevation

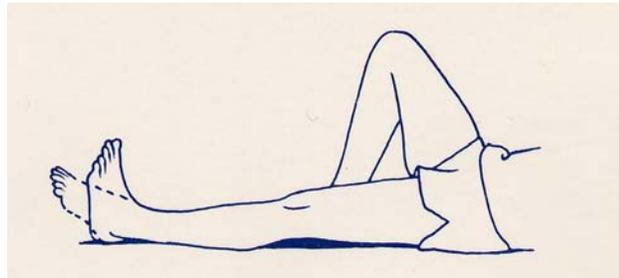
Elevate the injured area above the level of the heart as much as possible for the first 72 hours. Avoid simultaneous compression and elevation. Make sure you support nearby joints while doing this by using pillows etc.

Continue the exercises until your symptoms resolve. This may take up to 10 weeks

Exercises

After **24** hours you should start these exercises. All exercises should be repeated 10 times, 4 times a day, making the movement as large as the pain will allow.

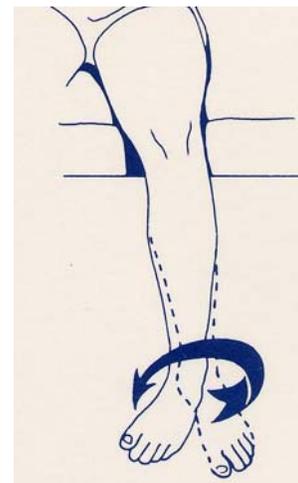
1. Pull your foot up towards you and then point your foot downward



2. Turn your foot up and out and then downwards and inwards.



3. Move your ankle around in circles.



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Continue with these exercises to try to regain a full range of movement.

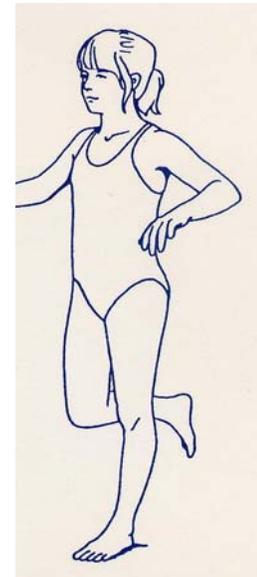
After **48 hours** you should start to put more weight through the foot as the pain allows. Remember to walk normally and place the heel down first before the ball of the foot.

When you are able to walk more comfortably you should add in the following exercises, to regain full **flexibility, strength and balance** to prevent recurrence. These should be performed 4 times a day.

4. Stand on your affected leg only and try to balance for 30 seconds.

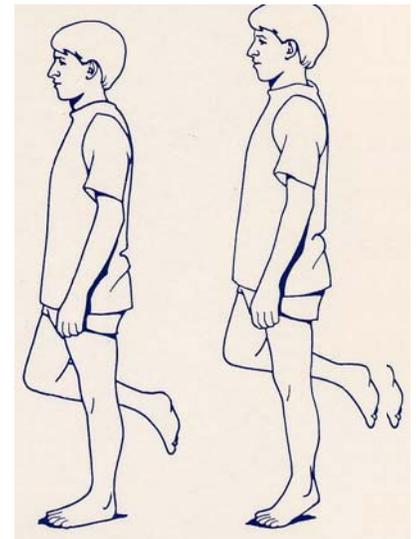
Compare with your other leg and continue practicing until you can balance for an equal length of time.

Once this has been achieved, progress the exercise by closing your eyes and balancing.



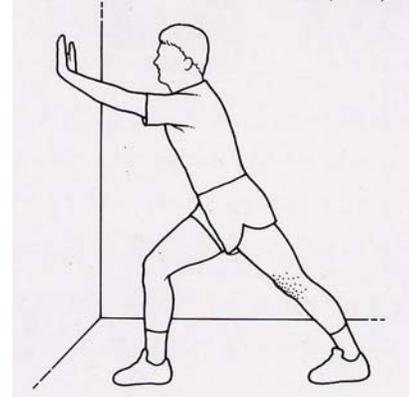
5. Stand on your affected leg only. Raise and lower your heel as high as possible 10 times.

If initially unable to raise and lower your heel standing on one leg, try holding the back of a chair for balance, or try raising on both legs and progress to one leg when you feel able.



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6. Stretch your Achilles tendon. Stand with your foot in front of the other about 2 feet apart (injured foot at the back). Keeping your heels on the floor and your back knee straight, bend your front knee until you can feel a stretch in your calf and hold for 20-30 seconds. Lean against a wall for support if required.



7. Practice walking indoors on tip-toes. Then practice walking on your heels with your toes up. These will strengthen the muscles in front and behind your ankle. You can rest a hand against a wall for balance if necessary.

Continue all these exercises until your symptoms resolve. This may take up to 10 weeks. Only return to sport when you have full movement and good balance



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