

# Foot and Ankle Pain

## Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



View our other **MSK Physiotherapy** resources

[www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

## What causes foot and ankle pain?

Foot and ankle pain is **very common** and can happen at any age. Some people get it more often than others. Even though the pain can be strong, it is usually not caused by serious damage.

Some potential causes of foot and ankle pain are:

- muscle, tendon or ligament injuries (e.g. sprains, strains or tears)
- age-related changes, also known as osteoarthritis.
- sudden changes in activity levels – doing much more than usual or being much less active
- poor sleep, stress, feeling low or very tired can also make pain worse
- repetitive or overuse injuries of the muscles/tendons around the foot and ankle.
- specific conditions such as plantar fasciitis or Achilles tendinopathy

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can be different for everyone, but may include:

- pain around the foot, heel or ankle
- swelling around the joint

- stiffness in the ankle
- pain when walking, standing or using the stairs
- a feeling of weakness or of the ankle feeling wobbly or unstable

Pain can change from day to day. This does **not** mean you are doing damage.

## Self-help

Most new foot and ankle pain improves within **6-8 weeks**. Following some of these useful tips should help with your recovery:

- change activity levels – don't stop completely, but reduce or adjust what you are doing at first
- keep the foot and ankle moving – gentle movement helps prevent stiffness and won't cause harm
- use simple pain relief – ask a pharmacist or GP for advice before taking
- look after your sleep and stress – both can affect pain
- stay at work or return as soon as you can – your employer or GP can help with adjustments
- try gentle exercises – moving regularly and doing simple exercises can help
- use heat or ice – a heat pack, hot water bottle or ice pack can ease pain (don't put this on to bare skin)

- wear comfortable, supportive footwear

## Should I refer myself to physiotherapy?

You may benefit from physiotherapy if:

- your foot or ankle pain hasn't improved after a few weeks, despite the above advice
- pain is affecting your work, sleep or daily activities.
- pain is affecting your ability to walk or exercise
- you keep getting repeated ankle pain or repeated ankle sprains

## When should I seek urgent medical advice?

Foot and ankle pain is **rarely serious**, however go to **Accident & Emergency or an Urgent Care Centre now** if you have:

- foot/ankle pain following a fall or injury
- a visible deformity to the foot or ankle
- a significant loss of movement in the foot/ankle and difficulty walking or putting weight through your foot
- sudden swelling, redness, warmth around the ankle with an associated fever

Contact your **GP or call 111 urgently** if you have:

- new, unexplained foot or ankle pain, with a history of cancer, HIV, TB or inflammatory arthritis
- foot or ankle pain, along with feeling unwell, a loss of appetite, fever, unexplained weight loss or night sweats
- pain affecting both of your feet or ankles with a lot of stiffness in the morning

## Remember

Most foot and ankle pain will improve with **time, gentle movement** and a **gradual return to normal activities**.





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.



## MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

[www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/)



## Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources [www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

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