Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust

Soft Tissue Injuries: Ankle

Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service

This guide is designed to help you understand your injury and how to help your recovery.

View our other **MSK Physiotherapy** resources

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/

What is a soft tissue injury?

Soft tissues include ligaments, muscles, and tendons (rather than bone). These can be injured if you fall or hurt yourself during sport or daily activities. Soft tissue injuries may also be called strains or sprains.

Symptoms of a soft tissue injury

After an injury, your body starts the healing process. This begins with inflammation. This can cause:

- Pain in and around the affected area
- Swelling
- Mild heat
- Redness of the affected area.

These symptoms are normal and are part of the body's healing process. There are things you can do to help your recovery.

What can I do in the first few days?

For the first 72 hours (3 days) follow **PEACE**.

Protection

Avoid movements that make the pain worse. Do not rest completely beyond the first few days.

Elevation

Raise the injured area higher than your heart if possible. This can help reduce swelling and support healing.

Avoid anti-inflammatories

Do not take anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen unless advised. They may slow down the body's natural healing response during the early stages of recovery.

Compression

You could use an elastic bandage or support to help reduce swelling.

Education

The first few days are often the worst. Stay calm and trust your body’s ability to heal. Avoid unnecessary passive

treatments such as massage and medical investigations such as an MRI scan.

What should I do after the first few days?

After the first few days, soft tissues need **LOVE**.

Load

Start using the injured area again slowly. Let pain guide you. Using your tissues by doing your normal activities including work as soon as possible will help you recover.

Optimism

Staying positive and being confident in the next steps you can take will both help your recovery.

Vascularisation (Keep Active)

Do activities that raise your heart rate and get you breathing more heavily, such as walking or cycling. Choose something that does not make your pain worse.

Exercise

Do simple exercises to improve movement and strength. Some mild discomfort during exercise is acceptable, but your pain should settle afterwards and should not

progressively worsen. As your pain improves, the exercises should become more challenging to help you return to activities that are important to you.

How can I ease the pain?

If you need pain relief, speak to your pharmacist or GP about which medication may be suitable for you.

You can use an ice pack (or bag of frozen vegetables) to help with pain. Wrap it in a towel. **Do not put ice directly on your skin.** Use for up to 20 minutes every 2 to 3 hours.

Is there anything else I can do to help my recovery?

- **Stop smoking:** smoking can slow down the healing process.
- **Drink less alcohol:** alcohol can delay your recovery.

During the **first few days** after injury, you should also:

- **Avoid heat:** do not use heat packs or hot baths.
- **Avoid massage:** do not massage the injured area.

How long will it take to get better?

Most soft tissue injuries improve significantly within 6 weeks, although some injuries may take up to 3 months or longer to

fully recover. You should notice steady improvement over time.

If you still have significant pain, difficulty moving, or problems returning to your usual activities after 6 weeks, you may benefit from physiotherapy. To self-refer to physiotherapy, visit our service webpage on the last page of this leaflet.

When should I seek urgent help?

Seek urgent medical advice by calling NHS 111 or attend A&E if you have signs of a serious injury, such as:

- the injured body part looks out of shape
- severe pain and swelling
- being unable to put weight through your leg or foot
- skin that looks blue, grey, or is cold to touch

Remember

Soft tissue injuries usually heal well with time.

To support your recovery:

- follow **PEACE** for the first 72 hours
- use **LOVE** after the first few days

Making lifestyle changes, such as stopping smoking and reducing alcohol intake, can support healing and recovery.

Gradually use the injured area again. Start with simple exercises and return to normal activities, including work and hobbies, as your symptoms allow.

Stay positive and trust the healing process – recovery takes time.

Exercises

Starting some simple exercises after the first few days can help your recovery.

It is normal to feel some discomfort during and for a short while after doing these exercises. But they should not cause your pain to get worse.

aim to repeat each exercise **up to 10 times**

at least **once a day** as able

(unless advised otherwise)

If these exercises start to feel too easy, you can try our rehab videos. These can be accessed in the 'Exercise Videos' area of our Resources page. See the front or back page of this leaflet for a link to our 'Further Resources'.

Exercises to improve movement

1. Ankle Pumps

Lying or sitting with one leg stretched out in front of you.

Bring your toes and foot up towards you and then point your toes and foot away.

Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/Dh-gaF-07Kc

2. Ankle Circles

Lying or sitting.

Move your ankle around in circles.

Go in both directions, anticlockwise and clockwise.

Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/6XX3R9ibBfw

3. Heel Raise in Sitting

Sitting on a chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Slowly raise up onto your toes.

Gradually control the movement back down.

Watch the video here:
https://youtu.be/aujGDKa4o8k

Exercises to improve strength

1. Heel Raise in Standing (Straight Leg)

Stand holding a support.

Slowly raise up onto your toes (keeping your knees straight).

Lower your heels down, controlling the movement.

Watch the video here:
https://youtu.be/cqDMYUaIXvw

2. Heel Raise in Standing (Bent Leg)

Stand holding a support.

Bend your knees slightly.

Keeping your knees bent, rise onto your toes, then slowly control the movement back down.

This is like the exercise above but works a different muscle.

Watch the video here:
https://youtu.be/atUz_RyJgrg

3. Isometric Ankle Eversion

Place the outside edge of your foot next to a wall or door frame.

Push your foot outwards against the door frame.

Hold the contraction for 5-10 seconds then relax.

Watch the video here:
https://youtu.be/g7MzQbhkMsU

4. Isometric Ankle Inversion

Place the inside edge of your foot against a door frame.

Push your foot inwards against the door frame.

Hold the contraction 5-10 seconds then relax.

Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/ID6lqjAh57w

Acknowledgements

Images used with kind permission from www.rehabmypatient.com

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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/

Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/

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