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Sprained foot or ankle

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Accident and Emergency Department
and Physiotherapy Department
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

What is a sprained foot or ankle?

When you “go over” on your ankle you stretch the ligaments. This leads to bruising, swelling and pain. The ligaments are the bands that hold the joint tight. They can be slow to get better, but here is some advice on how you can help yourself.

How can I treat it myself?

For the first 48 hours after your injury the following should help:

Rest Rest helps prevent further injury and allows the healing process to begin. For the first few days, reduce the amount of movements and activities you do.

Ice Wrap a bag of frozen peas or crushed ice in a wet towel. Place over your ankle on the side that is most painful. Do this for 5 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day. Carry on with this until the pain and swelling go away.

Pain
Control It's important to take painkillers regularly to reduce pain and help you keep mobile. Paracetamol and ibuprofen are effective painkillers if taken regularly. We don't routinely prescribe or dispense these as you can buy them over the counter at chemists and many other shops. Read the dosage instructions on the packs carefully. Please also check if there are any reasons why you can't take these medications. Your family doctor or pharmacist can advise.

Elevation Keeping your foot raised can help your circulation and reduce any swelling.

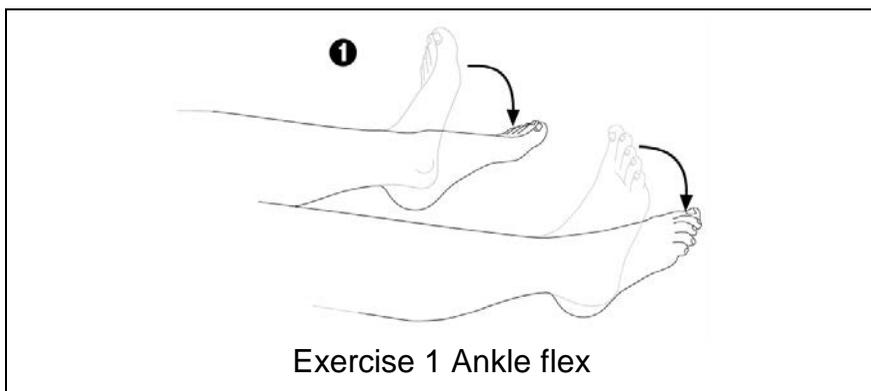
When can I put weight on my foot?

Gradually over the first week you should be able to get all your weight onto your leg and walk normally. Gradually stop using any walking aids such as a stick or crutch.

When can I start exercising?

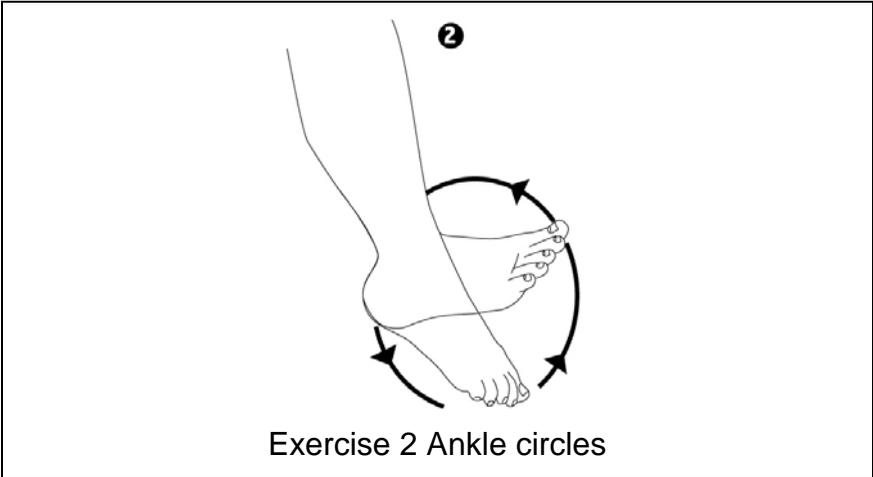
After 48 hours

Here are a few exercises to start after 48 hours. Gradually increase the range of movement over a few days.

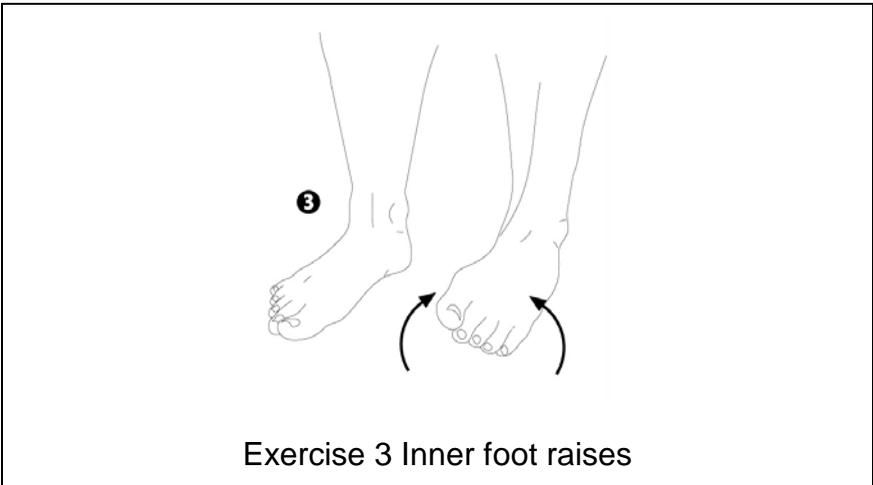


Exercise 1:

Lying on your back, or sitting, bend and straighten your ankles. Repeat 10 times.



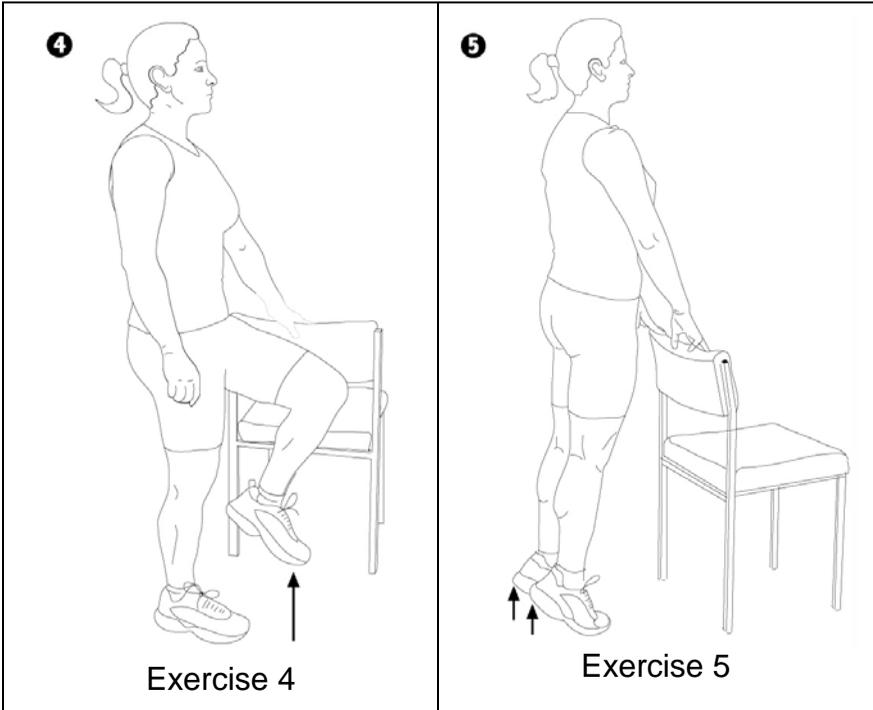
Exercise 2:
When sitting or lying, rotate your ankle. Then change direction. Repeat 10 times.



Exercise 3:
When sitting with your foot on the floor, raise the inner border of your foot (big toe) and then the outer border (little toe). Repeat 10 times.

Within a week of your injury

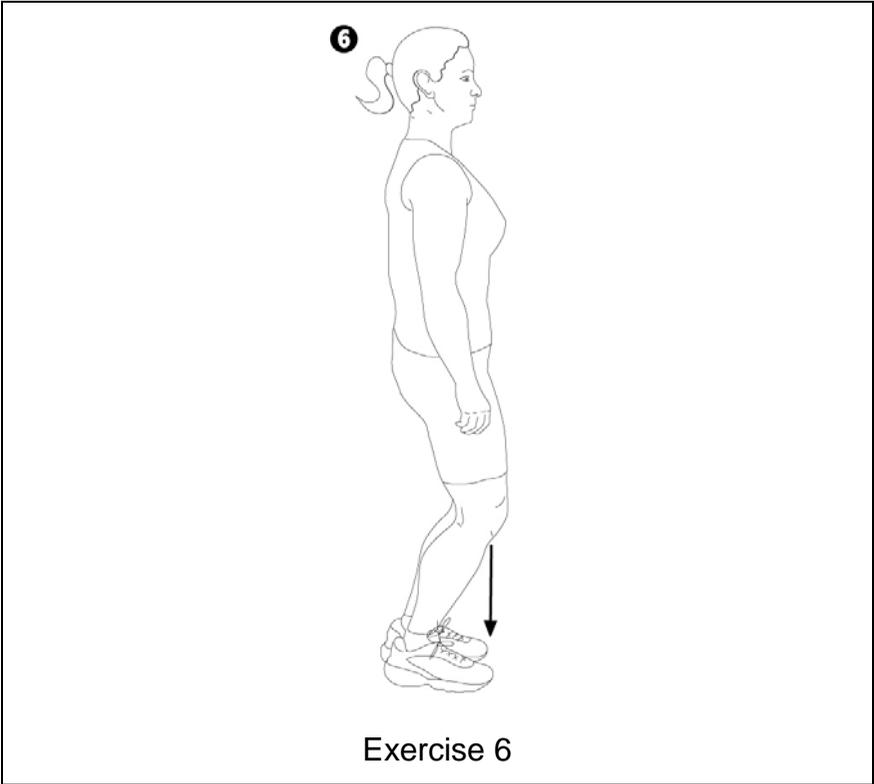
You should start the following exercises within a week of your injury, as your pain allows. Start gently at first.



Exercise 4:
Stand on one leg (your injured leg). Make sure that you have support available. Try to balance for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

Your balance will be poor at first. It is very important to improve it.

Exercise 5:
Stand. Push up on your toes. Repeat 10 times.



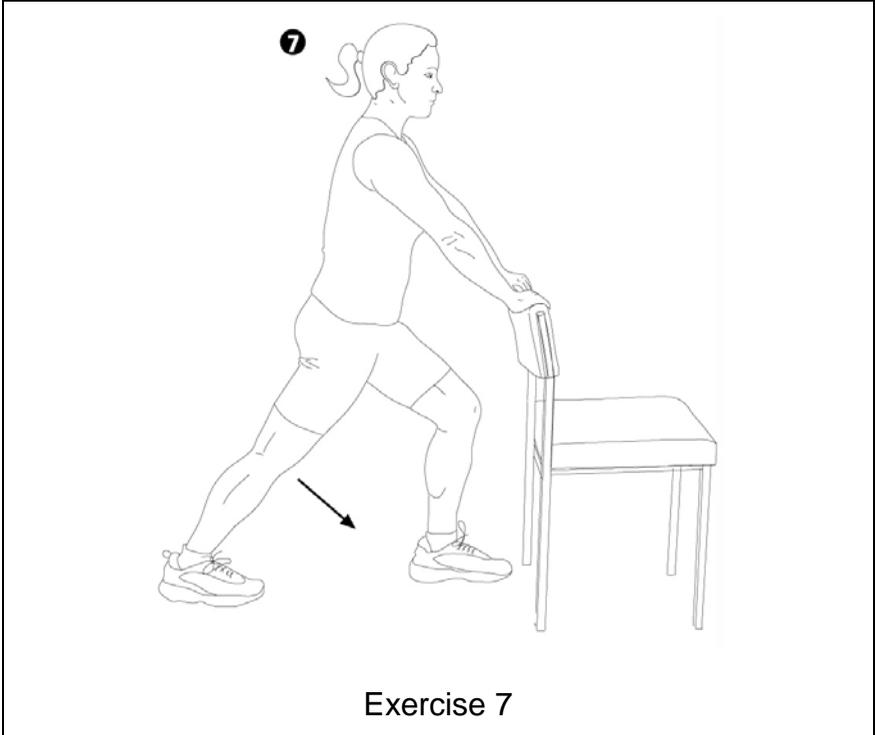
Exercise 6

Exercise 6:

When standing, tighten your buttocks and bend your knees. Your knees should end up over your toes. Don't go any further. Repeat 10 times.

One or two weeks after your injury

Stretches: Later (about 1 to 2 weeks after your injury and depending on your pain), you can move on to the following exercises. Also, gradually increase your activity levels.



Exercise 7:

Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and your other leg bent in front of you. Support yourself (for example with a chair). Lean your body forwards and down without lifting your heel off the floor until you feel stretching in the calf of the straight leg. Hold for 30 seconds, then relax. Stretch the other leg. Repeat 3 times.



Exercise 8:

Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched behind you. Hold on to something (for example the back of a chair). Bend the leg to be stretched and let your body weight stretch your calf without lifting your heel off the floor. Hold for 30 seconds then relax. Repeat 3 times.

When can I get back to my normal exercise?

Take things fairly easy at first. Try walking, swimming and cycling, which are all low impact.

Start with small amounts of exercise and gradually increase, as pain allows, to activities you did previously, such as running and football.

Remember, push UP to pain, but not INTO it

The pain and swelling should gradually settle. If the problem worsens and this advice is not helping, seek advice from your GP or the Accident & Emergency Department.

Contact number

**Accident & Emergency Department
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary**

 01224 553306 

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Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet.
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