



Advice and exercises for ankle fractures

You have fractured your ankle. This means that there is a break in the bone.

What should I expect?

Your ankle may be painful and swollen for a few weeks. When the bones are in a satisfactory position, your ankle will be supported in a cast for four to six weeks. You may have to attend several clinic appointments to check the position of the bones. If the bones are not in a satisfactory position you may require an operation; this will be discussed with you. These injuries usually heal well naturally.



How can I help myself?

While in the cast, keep your foot raised for most of the time. Do not allow the foot to hang down for long periods as it may become swollen and painful. Keep the joints not in the cast moving, to stop them becoming stiff, by doing the following exercises three to four times a day:

- 1 fully bend and straighten your knee
- 2 move your toes as far as your cast allows
- 3 squeeze your buttocks together and relax.

If there are any problems with your cast, please contact the Plaster Room. Contact details are:

Bassetlaw Hospital, tel 01909 572046

Doncaster Royal Infirmary, tel 01302 644608.

Answers to common questions

- most people are in a cast for six weeks after the break or surgery
- you may need crutches or a frame to help you get about safely while in the cast

- you will be told how much weight you can put on the leg while in the cast
- most of these breaks heal in 10 -12 weeks. It will take several months to return to full normal activity especially if you have had a complex injury, or have a very active lifestyle
- you can drive when you can do an emergency stop safely. This is usually at least six weeks after you have started to put weight on your leg
- you will need to check with your insurance company before you drive with your cast on.

When the cast is removed, follow this advice:

- bathe the joint in warm water (as long as all wounds are fully healed) for about 10 minutes
- dry the area and rub moisturiser in to soften hard and flaky skin. Firmly massage the cream into the tissue/scars to loosen the scar tissue and move any fluid in the area
- complete the exercises below, regularly throughout the day. It is normal to feel some discomfort during exercises but rest if there is a lot of pain and then try again later
- you may be provided with a splint or a firm bandage called tubigrip. This will help to support the joint and prevent swelling. This should be removed at night or if it feels too tight. Ensure there are no wrinkles in the bandage as this can leave marks in your skin.

To speed up your recovery, you should begin to do the following exercises to help you regain the movement in your ankle and foot. Each exercise should be done 10 times regularly throughout the day.


a


b

1 Bend and straighten your ankle, moving your foot up and down as far as you can.



2 Sit with your bad leg straight out in front of you and put a towel around your foot. Use the towel to help pull your foot up towards you, feeling a slight stretch in your calf, then push the foot down.





3 Turn the sole of your foot to face inwards, then turn it to face outwards

As you improve, start the following exercises



- 1 Sitting with your feet on the floor, roll your feet to face inwards.
- 2 Standing with the toes of your bad foot touching the wall and heel on the floor, stretch your knee forwards to touch the wall. Keep your heel on the floor.



- 3 Stand on both feet, rise up onto your toes, then slowly lower your heels back down. Make sure you have something stable to hold onto if required.



- 4 Stand on one leg and keep your balance. Then slowly try and slide a cloth around your standing leg.

The main problem following this injury is stiffness in the ankle, especially trying to get the knee to stretch in front of the ankle. You will also find it takes a long time to get your balance back.

Exercises two and four will need to be practised daily until your injured ankle is nearly as good as your uninjured ankle. It will take a further four to six months before you are able to return to all your normal activities.

Complications following this injury are relatively low and will depend on how complex the injury is and your general medical health. Most people can expect some long term stiffness in the ankle but this varies considerably from person to person.

Any further questions, please contact your Physiotherapy Department.

Doncaster Royal Infirmary 01302 644210

Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 572302

Montagu Hospital 01709 649190

Retford Hospital 01777 863400

For out of hours nurse advice, contact the Emergency Department

Doncaster Royal Infirmary 01302 642335

Bassetlaw Hospital 01909 502050.

Patient Experience Team

The team are available to help with any concerns/complaints you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: dbth.pals.dbh@nhs.net

