

# Ankle Injury

## Patient information

**You have been given this information leaflet because you have been diagnosed with an ankle sprain.**

A sprain is an injury to a ligament. Ligaments are strong band-like structures around joints which attach bones together and give support to joints. A ligament can be injured, usually by being over-stretched during a sudden pull. The ligaments at the side of the ankle are the ones most commonly sprained.

### Symptoms of a sprain can include:

- pain around the affected joint
- swelling
- tenderness
- being unable to use the joint normally or being unable to put weight on it
- bruising

The swelling from a sprain will often occur soon after the injury, but the bruising may not show until later or it may not show at all. Bruising can sometimes occur some distance from the affected joint.

## Treating an Ankle Sprain

Minor sprains and strains can usually be treated with self-care techniques, such as PRICE therapy (protection, rest, ice, compression and elevation). Generally, you should try to start moving a sprained joint as soon as it is not too painful to do so.

### For the first 48-72 hours think of:

- PRICE – Protect, Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation.
- Do no HARM - no Heat, Alcohol, Running or Massage.

## Recovering from an Ankle Sprain

The length of time it takes to recover from a sprain depends on how severe it is. After an ankle sprain you will probably be able to walk a week or two after the injury. You may be able to use your ankle fully after six to eight weeks, and you will probably be able to return to sporting activities after eight to 12 weeks

You should contact your GP if your injury does not improve as expected or your symptoms get worse.

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## Treating Pain

If needed, painkiller options include the following:

**Paracetamol** is usually recommended for painful sprains or strains.

**Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** relieve pain and may also limit inflammation and swelling. You can buy some types (eg, ibuprofen) at pharmacies, without a prescription either topically as a cream, or as tablets. You should check the medication advice leaflet to ensure you are safe to take these i.e some patients with asthma or stomach ulcers may not be able to.

If this does not help, you may need an additional stronger painkiller – such as codeine – you should discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

## Further Information

For further advice and information about your condition:

Please choose from the following:

- 'NHS Patient Choices' website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- 'Making Lives Better' patient website: [www.patient.info](http://www.patient.info)
- Telephone NHS 111
- Contact your General Practitioner

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### Contact details:

- The James Cook University Hospital: 01642 850850  
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Version 1, Issue Date: October 2018, Revision Date: October 2020