

# Soft tissue injuries to the ankle

## The paediatric virtual fracture clinic

**This leaflet explains more about soft tissue injuries to the ankle and the paediatric virtual fracture clinic. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

## What is a soft tissue injury?

A soft tissue injury to the ankle is more commonly known as an ankle sprain. This means that the ligaments or tendons have been stretched and bruised. Your child's foot and ankle may look very swollen, and they may have bruising up the ankle and down to their toes.

This type of injury heals very well with either a supportive shoe or a walking boot. The emergency department (A&E) will advise on the shoe required and provide a walker boot if appropriate. We do not use a heavy plaster for this type of injury. Ankle sprains usually heal within four to six weeks, although pain and swelling can continue for up to three to six months.

## How to care for your child's ankle sprain

**Pain relief:** Initially, your child may require regular painkillers. Use simple painkillers, such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen, if required. If your child has pre-existing medical conditions, check with a doctor or pharmacist before giving painkillers.

**Cold packs:** A cold pack is made by wrapping an ice pack in a damp towel. This can provide short-term pain relief. Apply a cold pack to the painful area for up to 15 minutes every few hours, ensuring the ice is never in direct contact with the skin.

**Rest and elevation:** Try to make sure that your child's foot is rested for the first 24 to 72 hours following the injury, to help reduce the swelling. You can use pillows or a stool to keep your child's foot elevated. Swelling is often worse at the end of the day, and elevating your child's foot will help them.

**Early movement and exercise:** Your child may walk on their foot as comfort allows, although they may find it easier to walk with crutches in the early stages. Some children do not experience much pain, and will not need their walking boot for more than one week. There is no reason to force your child to wear the boot if they are comfortable without it. Your child should avoid sports, skateboards and contact sports for two to three weeks following their injury. Swimming and cycling are usually fine.

## Rehabilitation plan

Please follow the rehabilitation plan detailed below to manage your child's sprain.

**0-2 weeks:** If your child has been supplied with a walking boot, they should wear this for comfort while walking. Whether they wear it at night in bed is up to you – this will depend on how your child feels the most comfortable. You can remove the boot to wash and air your child's foot while they are not walking. If they are using them, wean your child off crutches as soon as possible.

**2-6 weeks:** Try to wean your child out of the walking boot and help them to walk without crutches. They can try walking around the house at first. Your child can wear the boot if you go on a long walk, or they can use it on alternate days until their pain has started to reduce.

**6-12 weeks:** Your child's sprain will have healed by this point. Your child can resume normal activity in line with any pain or swelling they are experiencing. They should be able to take part in most activities again.

## What is the paediatric virtual fracture clinic?

Your child has been referred by the emergency department (A&E) to the paediatric virtual fracture clinic. This consists of the consultant orthopaedic surgeons and the senior staff nurse.

Your child's X-ray will be reviewed by a consultant orthopaedic surgeon on a Tuesday or Wednesday. An appointment will **not** be scheduled for this as the consultant will review the X-ray themselves in clinic.

You will be contacted directly by a member of the nursing team (usually on the Thursday or Friday after the virtual clinic), to advise you on the treatment plan and to answer any questions you may have.

Please be assured that if the consultant finds anything clinically urgent, or if there are any further questions they need to ask you, they will contact you directly

## Will my child need a follow-up appointment?

Your child will not need a follow-up appointment. As your child does not have a fracture, their pain will subside as the swelling and bruising goes down.

# Notes

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## Useful sources of information

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains/>

### Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's fracture, please contact the fracture clinic on 0207 188 9011 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm). Out of hours, please contact the paediatric emergency department on 0207 188 2111.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## **Evelina London Medicines Helpline**

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm

**e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Your comments and concerns**

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)   **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **Language and accessible support services**

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815   **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## **NHS 111**

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111    **w:** [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk)

**NHS Choices** – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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