

Ankle soft tissue injuries in children

Information for children, families and carers

We have given you this factsheet because your child has sustained a soft tissue injury to their ankle. It explains what an ankle soft tissue injury is and how it is treated. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is an ankle soft tissue injury?

An ankle soft tissue injury is when the soft tissues around the ankle (the ligaments, muscles or tendons) are damaged, but no bones are broken. Soft tissue injuries can include sprains, strains and bruising.

What causes this type of injury?

An ankle soft tissue injury is a common injury in children. It is usually caused by sudden, uncontrolled movements that overstretch or tear the soft tissues, such as twisting or rolling the ankle.

How is this type of injury diagnosed?

An x-ray (a quick and painless procedure commonly used to produce images of the inside of the body) has confirmed your child's injury and ruled out any fractures.

How is this type of injury treated?

Soft tissue injuries heal well on their own without causing any long-term complications and do not need a plaster cast.

Walker boot

We may give your child a walker boot to help them move around while their ankle recovers. Your child will usually need to wear this boot for four to six weeks until the swelling and pain eases. However, some children do not experience much pain after this type of injury and may only need to wear the walker boot for a week or so.

Rest, ice and elevation

Your child may experience some swelling and bruising for a few weeks after their injury. To help reduce swelling, your child should rest and elevate (raise above their heart level) their injured ankle and apply ice (an ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) for 10 minutes, three times a day for the first few days (especially at the end of the day).

Pain relief medication

Your child may experience some pain for a few weeks after their injury. Taking pain relief medications, such as paracetamol (Calpol®) and ibuprofen, for the first couple of weeks after the injury will help to ease their discomfort. Always check the label before giving your child any over-the-counter medications.

Are there any complications?

It is uncommon for children to experience any complications with an ankle soft tissue injury.

When can my child resume their normal daily activities?

Weeks since your child's injury	Recovery plan
0 to 2	<p>Your child should wear the walker boot when walking around and should try to walk on their injured ankle as much as they comfortably can.</p> <p>Your child should remove the boot when they are not walking around. For example, when they are sleeping, bathing or showering.</p>
2 to 6	<p>Your child should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• gradually stop wearing the walker boot as their pain eases (they may wish to begin by walking around the house without the boot on and then wearing the boot on alternate days).• start moving their ankle a bit more. Some children may need to have physiotherapy to help with this. If this is the case for your child, we will discuss this with you. <p>Your child should not participate in any contact sports or high impact activities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• basketball• cricket• football• hockey• horse riding• ice skating• rugby• running• skateboarding• skiing

6 to 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your child's soft tissue injury will have healed but they may continue to experience discomfort and swelling for up to six months. Your child should be able to resume most of their normal daily activities (as much as they can without experiencing pain).
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Will my child need any follow-up care?

Most children do not usually need to have any follow-up care for this type of injury.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact us if:

- your child's ankle pain has not improved after six weeks.
- your child struggles to put weight on their injured ankle after two weeks.
- your child has not regained full movement in their ankle after six weeks.
- your child is unable to resume their normal daily activities and sports after 12 weeks.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Children's outpatient department

Telephone: **023 8120 4477** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm)

Email: paedorthopaedics@uhs.nhs.uk

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/sprains-and-strains

www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/x-ray

www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-information-leaflets

www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk

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