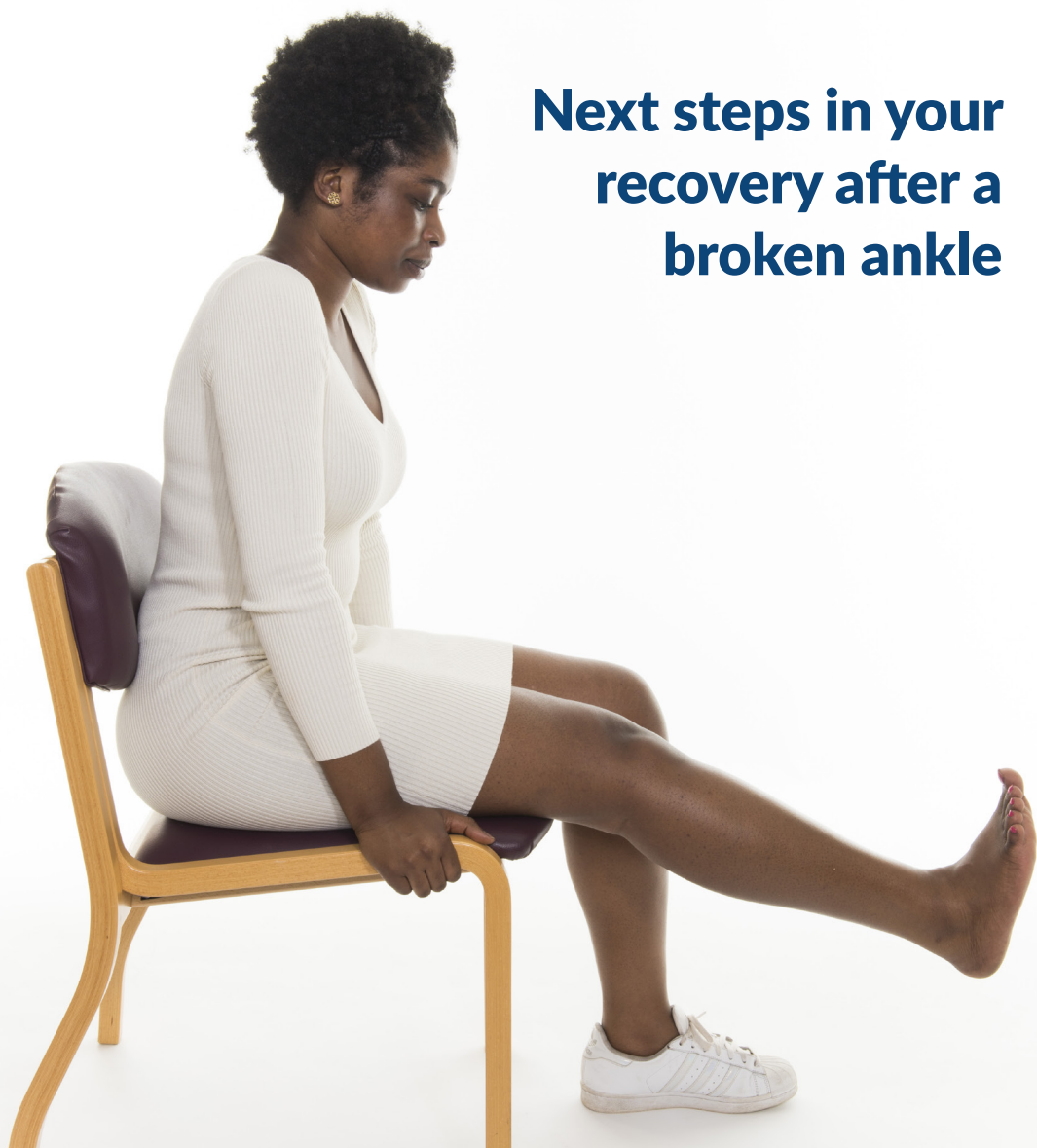


Next steps in your recovery after a broken ankle



Contents

- 03** What has happened to my ankle?
- 04** What should I do after my plaster cast or boot is removed?
- 06** Starting to walk
- 07** How long will it take to recover?
- 08** Starting your exercises
- 09** Starting to move the ankle
- 12** Starting to strengthen your ankle
- 14** Learning to balance
- 15** What to do if I am concerned
- 15** Keep going!
- 16** Exercise diary
- 29** Goal setting
- 30** Notes page

What has happened to my ankle?

You have broken (fractured) your ankle. An ankle fracture is a break of the bone at the lower end of your tibia or fibula, or both of these bones. To help the bones heal you will have had a cast or an operation.

After injury, the ankle can become stiff and the muscles can get weaker. Your balance can also be affected, making you feel a bit unsteady on your feet. For these reasons, exercises are an important part of your treatment.

This booklet will provide you with some advice to start the next stage of your recovery.

Sometimes your clinician will refer you to a physiotherapist for additional exercises and advice. This will be discussed with you during your appointment.



What should I do after my plaster cast or boot is removed?

If you've had a cast or boot on for a few weeks then your skin may be dry. As long as the clinician has said that any wounds you have are ok to get wet, then you should first soak your ankle in warm water for around ten minutes.

Following this, massaging the leg and any surgical scars you have with a non-scented moisturising cream each day is helpful.

If you have a scar from surgery it can become a bit sensitive to touch. Massaging it with different textures can help (for example, different types of clothing material, cotton wool, sponge). This can begin when the scar is healed. The sensitivity should improve gradually but can last for a few months.



What should I do after my plaster cast or boot is removed?

It is very common at this early stage in your recovery to experience swelling around the ankle. To reduce swelling during the day, elevate the foot on a stool or chair when resting. It helps if you can raise and rest your leg on cushions so that your toes are higher than your hips.

If your ankle is very swollen you can sometimes experience blisters that form where the ankle has broken. If this happens you should continue to manage the swelling by raising the leg. It is important that you do not pop the blister as this can increase the risk of infection. The blisters will usually resolve without any further treatment.

If your pain is not being managed very well you can discuss this further with your pharmacist or GP. It is important to manage this early so that you can start to do the early exercises needed to begin your recovery.

To help to reduce the pain you can use ice packs. These must be wrapped in a cloth and not used for more than 20 minutes at a time. Wait an hour before reapplying ice. It is not recommended to use ice packs if you have poor circulation or lack sensation around ankle unless you have been given advice to do so by a clinician.



Starting to walk

If your clinician has advised you not to put any weight through your broken ankle for a few weeks then doing this for the first time can feel like a big step towards your recovery.

When you first begin to put weight through your ankle your clinician will show you how to do this with walking aids, such as elbow crutches.

Usually you will begin with using two elbow crutches, progressing to one and then none. This gradual process is usually led by you, based on your pain levels and how comfortable you feel.

It is best to practice walking short distances in your own home to begin with. Once you are comfortable with this you can practice walking short distances outside. Finally, you can gradually increase the distances you are walking outside until you are back to your usual distances.



How long will it take to recover?

Your clinician will discuss with you what you can expect and what is achievable in the short and longer term.

In general you should return to all your previous activities. However, you may find that your ankle does not feel as strong as it was before, or remains swollen for many months after the injury. There is also a higher risk of developing future arthritis because of the injury.

In general the following is advised when starting to return to common activities:

- **Driving:** Not recommended until you are able to control the vehicle safely. Your clinician will discuss your particular circumstances and recommendations with you.
- **Lifting/Manual work:** Once you are walking without walking aids and putting your full weight through the ankle, you can begin to return gradually to heavier work duties.
- **Contact sports:** After a broken ankle the bones typically heal quite quickly so you can walk about and put weight through your foot. However, the bones will need to be protected for a bit longer before going back to a contact sport. Your clinician will discuss your particular circumstances and recommendations with you.



Starting your exercises

Starting to do your ankle exercises regularly is very important.

It can be difficult to keep track of what exercises you have done, and to keep motivated to continue doing them. To help we have included an exercise diary at the end of this booklet. Completing this diary can help you see the progress you are making and what you have done each day.

During this early stage it is also very useful to write down your personal goals related to your recovery. Your doctor or physiotherapist will help you to set some initial goals.

An example might be:

'My goal is to be able to walk to the local shop and carry back a bag of shopping within the next six weeks.'

There is a notes page after the exercise diary for you to have a think about your goals over the next few weeks and months. It is important that you acknowledge when you have achieved them or write down your thoughts and feelings if you do not, re-evaluating and reflecting as you progress through your recovery.



Starting to move the ankle

These exercises are the minimum you will need to do to start moving your ankle and get the best outcome.

To help you keep track of what you have done you will find it helpful to record how many and how often you do these in the 'exercise diary' included in this booklet.

A good starting point is to repeat each exercise ten times and try to do this three times a day. If this is comfortable then try increasing the number of times you repeat the exercise.

As an exercise becomes easier, increase the amount by doing another set of 10 repetitions. Build up further still by adding another set of 10 repetitions when you feel ready and as pain allows.

If you experience more pain than you can manage during or after an exercise, reduce the number of times you are doing the exercise you are finding difficult. You can always try and build up again gradually once the exercise becomes easier to manage.

Exercise One: Moving the ankle up and down

- Start by sitting up, with your legs out straight in front of you
- Move your ankle upwards as far as you can and hold for 10 seconds
- Move your ankle downwards as far as you can and hold for 10 seconds
- If this feels comfortable, you can get a bit more ankle movement upwards by putting a towel around your foot and gently pulling the towel

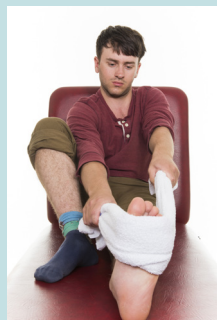
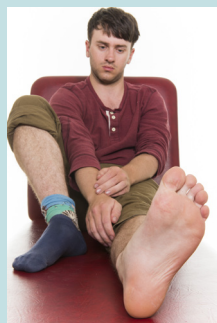
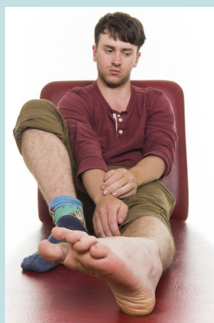


use your other foot to push the foot down

Starting to move the ankle

Exercise Two: Moving the ankle side to side

- Start by sitting up, with your legs out straight in front of you
- Move your ankle inwards as far as you can and hold for 10 seconds
- Move your ankle outwards as far as you can and hold for 10 seconds
- If this feels comfortable, you can get a bit more ankle movement inwards and outwards by putting a towel around your foot and gently pulling one side of the towel and holding, followed by the other side



Exercise Three: Moving the toes

- Start by sitting on a chair with your foot on the floor with a towel underneath the foot
- Using your toes pull the towel towards you



Please ensure you are wearing supportive footwear or are in bare feet when you do the exercises where you are on your feet.

Starting to move the ankle

Exercise Four: Stretching the muscles in the back of the leg

- Start by standing facing a wall, with your arms out stretched against the wall, legs straight
- Place your affected leg behind you, keeping the foot to the floor, bend your unaffected knee. **Make sure both feet are facing forwards**
- Bend your unaffected knee (picture below left)
- Hold for 10 seconds
- You should feel a stretch along the muscles at the back of your affected leg, if you do not then bend the front knee further (picture below right)
- Repeat on the other side



Starting to strengthen your ankle

Once you are comfortable with exercises one to four, you can begin to strengthen the muscles around your ankle.

As before, aim to do this in repetitions of ten, three times daily, but reduce

or increase this as pain allows. Don't forget to record your progress in your exercise diary and keep setting short and longer term goals – they will help keep you on track.

Exercise Five: Up onto your toes

- Start by standing in front of a table and place your hands on the table for balance
- Lift up your heel off the ground as far as you can manage and hold for five seconds
- Slowly lower back down
- To make this more challenging you can repeat just on your affected leg



Starting to strengthen your ankle

Exercise Six: Dips

- Start by standing in front of a table and place your hands on the table for balance
- Slowly begin to bend your knees, keeping your heel on the floor
- Slowly raise back up again
- To make this more challenging you can repeat just on your affected leg



Learning to balance

Improving your balance is vital to prevent any future trips or falls which could injure the ankle again.

Unlike the other exercises in this booklet, it is better to practice balancing regularly during the day.

Aim to practice balancing on at least five occasions during the day but reduce or increase this as pain allows. Some people find it useful to practice after a regular activity such as after making a drink.

'At first, have a table in front of you for support until you have built up your confidence.'

The first thing you can do is to practice just standing on one leg (the affected leg) in front of a table for balance.

When you can do this confidently and keeping your balance, you may like to try without a table.

Once you can hold this comfortably for 30 seconds you can make it more challenging by repeating with your eyes closed or with your leg on an unstable surface, like a cushion.



What to do if I am concerned

There is always a risk that you may not progress as quickly as you expect, or you experience a change such as sudden increased pain or swelling. If this occurs you can contact your GP in the usual way or call NHS 111, and if it is urgent, visit your Emergency Department.

Because you are taking part in a clinical trial you can also contact your local research team or the main trial team leading this project:

01865 223113



Keep going!

Well done on taking the time to read through this booklet. Keep recording your progress and setting new goals to keep track of your recovery.

FAME
— FRACTURED ANKLE —
MANAGEMENT EVALUATION

Patient Diary

This diary is not being collected by the FAME study, but is to help you manage your exercises. We hope you find it useful.

Every time you complete your exercises, place a tick in the appropriate box.

There is a goals page where you can record what you want to be able to do. There is also a notes page so you can record your thoughts and feelings. If you did not manage to complete any exercises that day you can note why.

Here's an example of a diary page, part-completed.

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 1 to Week 2					
	1. Moving ankle up & down			2. Moving ankle side to side		
Monday	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tuesday	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wednesday	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Thursday	✓	✓	✓			
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 1 to Week 2						
	1. Moving ankle up & down		2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes	
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 1 to Week 2									
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips			
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 3 to Week 4						
	1. Moving ankle up & down		2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes	
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 3 to Week 4									
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips			
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 5 to Week 6						
	1. Moving ankle up & down			2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 5 to Week 6									
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips			
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 7 to Week 8						
	1. Moving ankle up & down		2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes	
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 7 to Week 8						
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 9 to Week 10						
	1. Moving ankle up & down		2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes	
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 9 to Week 10									
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips			
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 11 to Week 12									
	1. Moving ankle up & down			2. Moving ankle side to side			3. Moving the toes			
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										
Monday										
Tuesday										
Wednesday										
Thursday										
Friday										
Saturday										
Sunday										

Week Commencing/...../.....	Week 11 to Week 12						
	4. Stretching back of leg			5. Up on your toes			6. Dips
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							
Monday							
Tuesday							
Wednesday							
Thursday							
Friday							
Saturday							
Sunday							

My goals

Short term

Example: *My goal is to be able to walk to the local shop and carry back a bag of shopping within the next six weeks'.*

Long term

Notes

This is a space for you to acknowledge when you have achieved your goals or write down your thoughts and feelings if you do not, re-evaluating and reflecting as you progress through your recovery.

Notes

This is a space for you to acknowledge when you have achieved your goals or write down your thoughts and feelings if you do not, re-evaluating and reflecting as you progress through your recovery.



For further information please visit or contact:

w: www.famestudy.org

e: fame@ndorms.ox.ac.uk

t: 01865 223113

Follow us on Twitter: [@Oxford_Trauma](https://twitter.com/Oxford_Trauma)

Version 1.0 10 September 2019