

Ankle exercises

0 – 6 weeks



The first 6 weeks after removal of a cast/splint

Your ankle was injured and you had to be in a cast/splint for a period a time to allow it to heal. During this time your ankle becomes stiff and the muscles become tight and weak. Your orthopaedic doctor is satisfied that the injury has healed. It is now important to get back the movement and strength in the foot and ankle (and get you doing what you need to do).

Skin and swelling

You will notice the skin may look different where the cast was in place. It is normal to have skin and hair that gathered under the cast. If you had surgery, you will see a scar that should be on its way to being healed. Wash the skin with warm, soapy water and apply moisturising cream if the skin is very dry. The skin will gradually return to normal. Contact your physiotherapist, orthopaedic doctor or local doctor if you have any concerns about your scar.

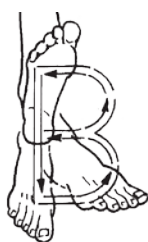
There is usually still some swelling in the leg after the cast is taken off. To help reduce this swelling you may want to wear a compression bandage; also, elevate your leg during the day (when possible). It should continue to improve with time and exercise.

Walking

Walking may be difficult at first, but it will get easier with time. Start with small walks and as you are able to, go for longer walks. When walking it is important to land down on your heel and push off from your toes. This helps to restore normal movement and strength. Also, try and keep your foot facing straight forward, not turned out to the side.

Exercises

Some exercises are listed below. These will help you get back to normal. It is recommended that you do these exercises 3 times a day. It is normal to feel some stretching or pressure in the ankle and even some mild pains during the exercise. These should ease off with stopping the movement. If you are feeling strong pain, stop the painful exercises. Check with your physiotherapist or orthopaedic doctor before starting again.



Move your ankle around slowly as if tracing the letters of the alphabet.

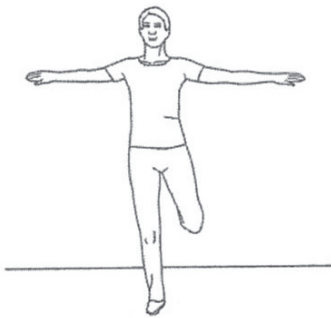
Try to move the ankle right up and down and side to side to get movement in all directions.



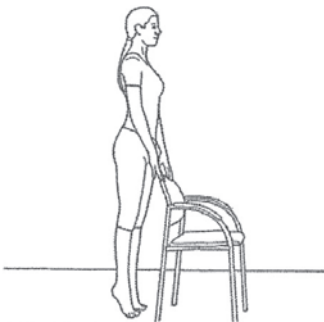
Position your body facing a wall or chair with the affected foot behind. Point your toes forward and keep the heel down. Then lean towards the wall until you feel a stretch in the calf. Hold this position for 10 seconds and repeat 3 times. If this is easy then try holding for longer, up to a minute.



Stand with affected foot on a step or low stool with the toes pointing forward. Lean your knee forward over your toes until you feel a stretch in the ankle and foot. Hold this position for 10 seconds and repeat 3 times. If this is easy then try holding for longer, up to a minute.



Stand close to a solid support such as a wall, rail, table or kitchen counter. Stand on the affected leg and try to maintain your balance for 20 seconds. Repeat this about 3 times. When confident, practice this exercise with eyes closed. To progress further, practice on a soft surface, e.g. a folded towel or in the sand.



Stand close to a solid support such as a wall, rail, table or kitchen counter. Raise up onto your toes as high as you can. Hold for 5 seconds and then slowly lower down. Repeat this 10 times or until you are feeling tired in the muscles. If you are finding this easy then try just standing on the affected leg and repeat the exercise just on the one leg.

For any questions contact Physiotherapy Departments on the following phone numbers:

- Gosford 4320 3314
- Wyong 4394 8217
- Woy Woy 4344 8446
- Long Jetty 4336 7752

This brochure contains general information for patients being treated at Central Coast Local Health District. It is not a substitute for more detailed information from the Orthopaedic and Physiotherapy Department (OPD). If any exercise causes more than mild discomfort, stop and seek advice from the OPD.