

## Important

You should return to the Emergency Department immediately if you are affected by any of the following:

- increased pain
- increased swelling
- numbness or pins and needles in the affected leg
- inability to move your toes
- blueness of the toes
- if the cast cracks, becomes loose or is rubbing your skin.

### Do not:

- ✘ put any weight on your cast or put anything heavy on your cast.
- ✘ cut your cast – always come back to the Emergency Department if your cast needs trimming.
- ✘ wet the cast. Ensure you cover the cast with a plastic bag or cover when in the bath or shower.
- ✘ poke anything down the cast as you may cut your skin or cause a wound to become infected.

### Are you aged over 50?

People who are over 50 who break a bone should be referred automatically for a DEXA scan to check for bone fragility.

If you haven't had an appointment and you think you should have one, please ask your GP, physiotherapist or hospital doctor.

Vitamin D and calcium are important for healthy bones. For further information visit:

[www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)

## Further advice and information

Further injury advice and prevention can be found at:

**NHSinform** - [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot)

**National Osteoporosis Society** - [www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk)

### NHS Western Isles Physiotherapy Department:

Western Isles Hospital  
MacAulay Road  
Stornoway  
Isle of Lewis HS1 2AF  
Tel. 01851 708258

Uist and Barra Hospital  
Balivanich  
Benbecula  
HS7 5LA  
Tel. 01870 603641

## We are listening - how did we do?

We welcome your feedback, as it helps us evaluate the services we provide. If you would like to tell us about your experience:



- speak to a member of staff
- visit our website: [www.wihb.scot](http://www.wihb.scot). [nhs.uk/feedback](http://nhs.uk/feedback) or share your story at: [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk) or tel. 0800 1223135
- tel. 01851 704704 (ext 2236) Monday-Friday between 10am-4pm.

Version: 4  
Written by: Dr. Kate Dawson

Review Date: February 2028

### Disclaimer

The content of this leaflet is intended to augment, not replace, information provided by your clinician. It is not intended nor implied to be a substitute for professional medical advice. Reading this information does not create or replace a doctor-patient relationship or consultation. If required, please contact your doctor or other health care provider to assist you to interpret any of this information, or in applying the information to your individual needs.

© NHS Western Isles, 2018, 2019, 2022, 2026. All rights reserved.



Bòrd SSN nan Eilean Siar  
NHS Western Isles

## Advice for patients in a below-knee cast



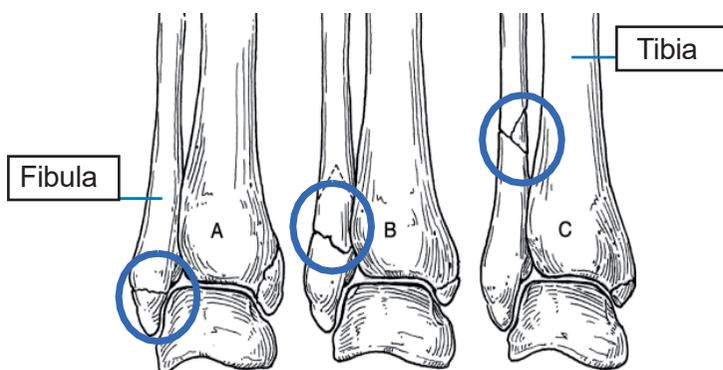
Useful information and advice

This leaflet is aimed at providing useful advice while your ankle is immobilised in a below-knee cast. This is most commonly used to manage a broken ankle.

Information will support the advice given by your physiotherapist and consultant. Following this advice and doing the exercises suggested will help your injury to heal properly and reduce stiffness in your joints.

## What is a broken ankle?

- A fracture is the same as a break.
- It normally involves a break to the fibula on the outside of your lower leg. It can occur at different levels (see diagram).
- Occasionally the tibia may also fracture.



## How is it treated?

**Cast:** Your ankle may need to be manipulated into the correct position first. You will usually be in a cast for four to six weeks. This could be plaster of Paris, air cast boot, or scotch cast.

**Surgery:** In some cases, an operation is required. The ends of the bone are held in place with pins and plates.

## Crutches and walking frames

While your ankle is in a cast, you will need either crutches or a walking frame. The Physiotherapists will help assess you for walking aids during their normal working hours.

## Symptoms and solutions

**Pain:** It is normal to have some pain after your fracture. You should take the painkillers you have been prescribed. If the pain is severe, you should contact your GP, Emergency Department or NHS24 by telephoning 111.

**Swelling:** Swelling is inevitable after a fracture. This will be worse in the first two weeks. To minimise swelling, try the following:

- rest with your leg up
- put your leg on a pillow at night.

**Tiredness:** It is normal to feel very tired after an injury. Take time to rest and recover.

**Strength and Stiffness:** While your ankle is healing in the cast your muscles become weak and your joints become stiff. This could include other leg muscles which should be exercised to keep them strong and other joints such as your hip and knee.

## Exercises

Exercise, like medication, requires a specific dose. Not enough will be of no benefit, and too much may do harm. Only exercise to a comfortable level. Mild discomfort is normal, as long as it settles during the day.

## Daily exercises

**Wiggle your toes:** Do this whenever you think of it. Wiggling your toes will help keep the blood flowing and help to prevent the joints in your toes, foot and ankle from becoming painfully stiff.

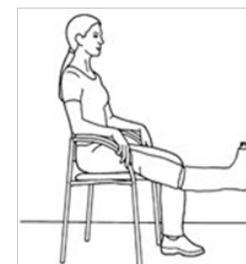
**Toe exercises:** Curl your toes. Place the bottom of your cast and heel flat on the floor. Curl your toes under, hold for five seconds and release. Stretch your toes out, hold for five seconds, release and repeat ten times. Do this at least four times a day.

**Static Exercises:** These exercises work the muscles without moving your joints. Sit in an upright chair with your foot resting flat on the floor. Press your foot towards the floor and hold for five seconds, release and repeat ten times. Do this at least four times a day.



**Leg Lifts:** You will need to strengthen and stretch the muscles in your thigh while you are in a cast. Lie flat with your leg and knee straight.

Raise your leg a few inches above the floor and hold for five seconds and then lower again. Repeat ten times and do this four times a day.



**Knee exercises:** Sitting in a chair, bend your knee as far as it will go and hold for five seconds. Then straighten your leg out as far as you can, and hold for five seconds. Repeat ten times, and do this four times a day.

**Remember - do not push into pain.**