

Information for patients and carers

Avulsion Fractures Around the Foot and Ankle



What is my injury?

Avulsion fracture (an injury to the soft tissues that has pulled off a flake of bone with it as it occurred).

How common are avulsion fractures?

Avulsion fractures around the foot and ankle are common injuries which usually occurs when you “go over” on your ankle or twist your foot awkwardly. This injures the soft tissues around the joint and pull off a flake of bone from where it was attached to.

What symptoms do avulsion fractures cause?

Initially symptoms commonly include pain, swelling, bruising and difficulty weight bearing. The pain experienced can be severe.

How should I be looking after my avulsion fracture?

The initial treatment in the first few days after a sprain aims to settle down the pain and swelling by resting, applying ice packs, taking regular painkillers and elevating the ankle.

It is important to remember that early weight bearing aids a quicker recovery. It is important to keep the ankle and foot moving to prevent stiffness.

If you smoke, you are advised to stop as smoking can slow down healing.

What do I do if I have been provided with a “boot” to wear?

Sometimes A&E and minor injuries departments will give a “walker boot” to people with avulsion fractures. This may help initially with the pain,

but it is important to not become reliant on this boot as this will make the ankle weaker and stiffer in the longer term.

The boot should be removed at regular intervals and discarded as soon as it is no longer helping. Keep yourself hydrated and mobile as reduced mobility from avulsion fractures can increase the risk of a blood clot in the leg or chest. Symptoms such as leg pain or swelling, shortness of breath, coughing up blood, chest pain or feeling faint require you to attend A&E urgently.

Do I need physiotherapy?

Most patients benefit from physiotherapy advice to work on range of movement exercises and to build up strength and proprioception (knowing where your ankle and foot is positioned without having to look at it). In addition to recovery after an avulsion fractures, these exercises also help to minimise recurrent injuries occurring. It is important you do these exercises that have been advised. You will usually be referred to physiotherapy for their expert input.

How quickly will things improve?

The vast majority of avulsion fractures will settle, and the soft tissues heal within 6-8 weeks. Occasionally some people have ongoing problems, these can include ongoing pain or giving way. It is important you contact us if you are still having problems.

Do I need further x-rays?

The overwhelming number of these avulsion fractures heal with no problems. However, it is rare that the fragment of bone will attach back to where it came from. This means if you have an x-ray in the future for a different reason, it is quite likely you will still see the fragment of bone. This does not mean the injury has not healed. The soft tissues attached to the bony fragment will have healed back to where they came from and the bony fragment will be contained within scar tissue. The scar

tissue and soft tissues are not visible on an x-ray, for this reason, x-rays are unhelpful in the long-term management of these injuries unless you have ongoing symptoms.

When can I get back to normal activities?

In terms of return to sport, we would generally recommend you are pain free before undertaking vigorous physical activity. This is usually 6 – 8 weeks but can be longer.

Return to work should be guided by your symptom level and what your job involves, for example, manual workers may need more time off work than administration workers due to the nature of their job.

In terms of driving, it is your responsibility to ensure you are fit to drive and are able to fully control your car before you return to driving. The DVLA website has further information regards this.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact the Fracture clinic on **01772522878**.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

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This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:
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