

Virtual Fracture Clinic

Stress fractures of the foot

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

The Virtual Fracture Clinic (VFC) helps you recover from your injury without needing to come back to the hospital. This is called self-management.

Use the rehabilitation plan in this leaflet to guide your recovery.

Video about your injury and recovery

Watch this video to help your recovery. A doctor explains your injury and a physiotherapist shows how to do the exercises:

www.fracturecare.co.uk/care-plans/foot/foot-stress-fracture/

What is a foot stress fracture?

A stress fracture to the foot is usually an injury caused by overuse. Repetitive stress to the bone can cause it to weaken and break over time. They are commonly seen in long-distance runners.

Healing

It can take up to 6 to 12 weeks for this fracture to heal.

Smoking slows down your healing. So, we advise that you stop smoking (including vaping) while your fracture heals. For more information, talk to your GP or go to nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

Pain and swelling

You may have foot pain and swelling. Swelling is often worse at the end of the day. You can expect to have mild pain and swelling for 3 to 6 months after your injury.

You can help reduce pain and swelling by:

- taking pain medication
- raising your ankle on a stool or cushions above the level of your hip (elevating)
- using ice or cold packs



Raise your ankle and use ice or cold packs

Walking and your boot

The boot protects your foot and will make you more comfortable. Wear the boot when you are standing and walking. You can take it off at night and at rest.

Wear the boot for 6 weeks after your injury.

You are allowed to put weight through your foot. You may find it easier to use crutches in the early stages.

Please tell us if you are diabetic; you may need a specialist boot.



A boot protects your ankle and will make you feel more comfortable

Exercises

It is important to start exercises as soon as possible. Good rehabilitation will improve your recovery.

You can expect some discomfort at first. Do not continue if the pain gets worse and you cannot tolerate it. Follow the instructions on the next pages

Follow up

Follow-up appointments are not usually needed for this injury. Patients usually recover well with self-management. But please contact our team if you:

- still have significant pain and swelling after 3 months

Caring for your injury: weeks 1 to 6

Remember to wear your boot when you are standing and walking. You can remove the boot when resting, at night and to wash and dress. Wear a long sock in your boot.

Using a cold pack will help with your pain and swelling.

- use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel
- put this on your foot for up to 15 minutes every few hours

- make sure the ice is not in direct contact with your skin

Try to rest your foot, especially in the first 24 to 72 hours. Raise your foot on a stool or cushions so that it is above the level of your hip. This will help to reduce your swelling.

Exercises

It's important to move your ankle and foot as soon as you can. This promotes circulation and reduces the risk of developing a blood clot (deep vein thrombosis).

Do these exercises 3 to 4 times a day. Start straight away, working within your pain levels.



Point your foot up and down. Repeat 10 times.



With your heels together, move your toes apart to turn the foot outwards. Repeat 10 times. Do this movement gently so you remain comfortable.



Make gentle circles with your foot in one direction and then the other direction. Repeat 10 times.

Caring for your injury: weeks 6 to 12

It is now 6 weeks since your injury. You can start to get used to not wearing your boot.

Stop using it around your own home first and continue wearing it for longer distances.

You should aim to be walking without your boot by 8 weeks after injury.

You can expect mild discomfort and swelling. This may continue for 3 to 6 months.

Activity and exercise

Keep doing your exercises until you recover full movement of your foot.

Gradually increase your level of activity. You should avoid impact activity for 3 months. This includes running, jumping and dancing.

Frequently asked questions

It's hard for me to walk in my boot. What do I do?

The boot has a thicker sole than normal shoes. This can make you feel uneven. Make sure you wear a supportive shoe or trainer on your uninjured foot. This will reduce stress on other joints. For more advice, contact the VFC.

I am diabetic. Is it ok for me to wear a boot?

If you are diabetic, please contact us to discuss your boot. This is particularly important if you have problems with your skin or sensation. We may provide you with a specialist diabetic boot.

When can I drive again?

You can return to driving when:

- you are no longer using your boot,
- you can walk comfortably and
- you can perform an emergency stop pain free

Always test how well you can drive in a safe place first.

How can I get a 'fit note' for work?

Ask your GP for a 'fitness for work' statement. You can give this to your employer.

What do I do with my crutches and boot when I no longer need them?

Please return your crutches to the fracture clinic or to A&E. They can be refurbished and reused. Your boot cannot be used again, so you do not need to return it.

Contact the VFC

We're here to help if you've got concerns about your injury, symptoms or exercises.

Call us on 077 7455 5354 (Monday to Friday between 09.00 and 17.00).

Or you can **email** imperial.vfc@nhs.net.

So, please contact us if you:

- have any concerns about your injury or symptoms
- cannot follow this rehabilitation plan
- are expecting an appointment letter and have not received it
- need help with your boot, brace or sling

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service. Staff will be happy to answer your questions. So if you have **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please talk to a member of staff. Or you can contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**). Call **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday) or email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net

The PALS team will listen to your concerns and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Or, to complain, contact our complaints department:

Call **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Or write to: Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

imperial.communications@nhs.net

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