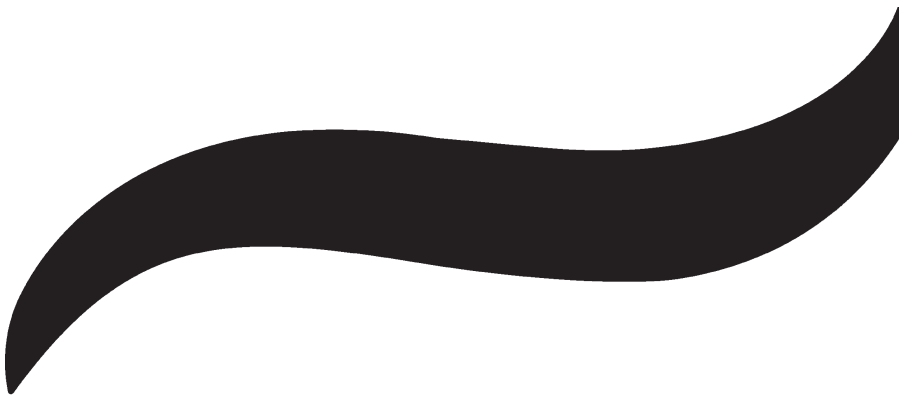




# Calf Injury Advice

Information for patients  
Physiotherapy Services



## **CALF INJURY**

Calf injuries are common and painful. They are often caused by overstretching or putting excessive force through the calf muscle. You will probably have felt a sudden pain, popping or tearing sensation. Your calf may be swollen, bruised and warm and it will probably be particularly sore when you try to walk.

### **IMMEDIATELY AFTER INJURY IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING, PLEASE GO TO YOUR CLOSEST A&E**

- ❖ Sudden severe pain in your calf or ankle
- ❖ Unable to walk or take weight through your leg
- ❖ Unable to stand on tip toes
- ❖ A gap in your calf muscle or tendon (the cord above your heel bone) that you can see or feel
- ❖ Tenderness over the bones of your foot and ankle

## **DURING THE FIRST 24 HOURS FOLLOWING INJURY**

- ❖ Rest as much as possible and raise your leg on a stool or a chair to help reduce the swelling.
- ❖ You can apply ice, wrapped in a damp cloth, to the affected area for a maximum of 20 minutes. This can be done three or four times a day. Do not use ice if you have circulatory problems, are diabetic or if you experience any pain when applying the ice. Do not apply ice or an ice pack directly onto your skin.
- ❖ If you have been provided with a heel wedge, use it when walking and continue to use it for up to two weeks.
- ❖ If you have been given a stick or crutches, use them to allow you to put some weight through your leg as soon as possible. Aim to gradually reduce the use of the walking aid, as it becomes more comfortable to put weight through your leg.
- ❖ Take your painkillers, as advised by the hospital, or discuss your medication requirements with your local pharmacy or your GP.

## **IF YOU DEVELOP ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS, GO TO YOUR CLOSEST A&E:**

- ❖ Pain in your calf or thigh that has started for no apparent reason
- ❖ Throbbing or cramping pain in your calf or thigh
- ❖ Swelling of your calf or thigh
- ❖ Warmth in the skin around the painful area
- ❖ Red or darkened skin around the painful area
- ❖ Swollen veins that are hard and painful to touch

## MANAGEMENT AFTER 24 HOURS

It is important to start exercising your calf muscle as soon as you can, in order to prevent stiffness and weakness. You should aim to do the exercises detailed below regularly. Try and do them every one to two hours. You should start gently and whilst they may cause a little discomfort, they should not cause any pain.

1. Move your foot up and down at the ankle whilst keeping your knee straight. You should feel a slight stretch on your calf. Repeat this movement 10 times.



2. Move your foot inwards and outwards whilst keeping your knee straight. Repeat this movement 10 times.



3. When these exercises become easy (usually after three to five days), place a towel around your foot whilst keeping your knee straight.

Gently pull on the towel until you feel a gentle stretch in your calf. Hold for 30secs and repeat three times.

Do this four to five times a day.



## INCREASING YOUR EXERCISES

When you can stand on your leg more comfortably without support, you are ready to progress your exercises. There are two additional exercises that you should do:

### 2. Calf stretch

Stand arms length away from a wall with your feet pointing towards it. Put your hands on the wall, palms flat.

Place your injured leg behind and place your heel on the floor, keeping your knee and back straight.

Support your weight with your hands on the wall, lean forwards until you feel a gentle stretch in your calf.

Hold this position for 30secs and repeat three times.

Repeat this exercise three or four times a day.



## 1. Heel raises

Use a wall for balance. Lift your heels off the floor.

This can feel tight but should not be painful.

Repeat this exercise 10 times and do it two or three times a day.



## RECOVERY

- ❖ Remember, it may take six to eight weeks for your calf to return to normal.
- ❖ You should return to normal activities gradually as pain allows.
- ❖ You may have to avoid sports for six weeks.
- ❖ You could try returning to sport when your calf is pain free. Make sure you do this gradually. If you have any pain following activity, try to do less the next time and slowly build back up.

### If symptoms are not improving

If your symptoms are not improving within 3 weeks and you have none of the symptoms on page x (page x – If you develop any of the following symptoms for no apparent reason or these symptoms after injury attend your closest A&E) you can self-refer to physiotherapy by:

- ❖ Scanning the QR code on your mobile device.
- ❖ Visit our website:  
<https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/services/physiotherapy-msk/>

If unable to access the above methods - contact your GP for a referral to physiotherapy.

You can also visit the Musculoskeletal Section of the NHSinform website [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk) to access a wide range of information and advice – including physiotherapy video clips.



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