

# Metatarsal fracture

The metatarsal bones are some of the most commonly fractured (broken) bones in the foot. There are two main types of metatarsal fractures:

**Acute fractures** - due to an acute (sudden) injury to the foot (commonly dropping a heavy object on to the foot, fall, twisting or a sporting injury).

**Stress fractures** - due to overuse, or repetitive, injury to a normal metatarsal bone.

You have 5 Metatarsal bones in each foot they are known as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th the 1st Metatarsal is the largest and joins to your big toe.

## Signs & symptoms

You may experience the following:

- pain, usually over the fracture site,
- difficulty walking,
- swelling (predominantly over the injured area),
- bruising
- you may have difficulty putting weight on the affected foot.
- movement of your foot may also be limited

## What do I need to do?

You will need to immediately remove any toe or ankle jewellery.

## How is your metatarsal fractures treated?

A supportive tubigrip-type dressing with a supportive, rigid shoe or boot can be worn. Progressive weight-bearing on the foot can then follow as pain allows.

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (if you are able to take them) may help to relieve the pain.

Applying ice to your foot and elevating your foot can also be helpful as pain relief in the initial stages after your injury.

Metatarsal fractures generally take around six to eight weeks to heal. However, some discomfort can persist longer than this and it is likely to take up to 3 months to return to sporting activity. The swelling may also persist for some time.

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## What if I have a problem?

If you are not feeling any improvement in your symptoms after 12 weeks please return to the accident and emergency department where an appointment to see the orthopaedic team will be made.

## Treatment of a 5th metatarsal fracture

Early weight bearing (ie putting weight on your injured foot) has been shown to help your symptoms settle more quickly. Because of this most people will not be given crutches, but we will assess each patient individually. Always try to walk normally ie your heel strikes the floor first, rock forward on your foot, and then push off with your toes.

- Rest the affected joint for 48 hours after the injury. This will prevent further injury and allow the healing process to begin.
- Ice should be applied as soon as possible after the injury to ease the pain, swelling and bruising. This can be done by wrapping a packet of frozen vegetables (peas) or crushed ice in a wet tea towel or pillow case to prevent ice burn. Gently press the ice pack onto the injured ankle for about 10 to 15 minutes, repeat this 4 times per day for 2 days.
- To reduce swelling, always elevate the injured limb above the level of your hips. This should preferably be across the settee, with your leg propped up on a pillow or cushion.
- Take regular painkillers, such as Paracetamol. Please read the dosage instructions on the package carefully.

## Exercises to reduce stiffness and increase movement

### In the first 7 days after injury:

Gently move your ankle up and down.  
Repeat each movement 5-10 times

### After 7 days:

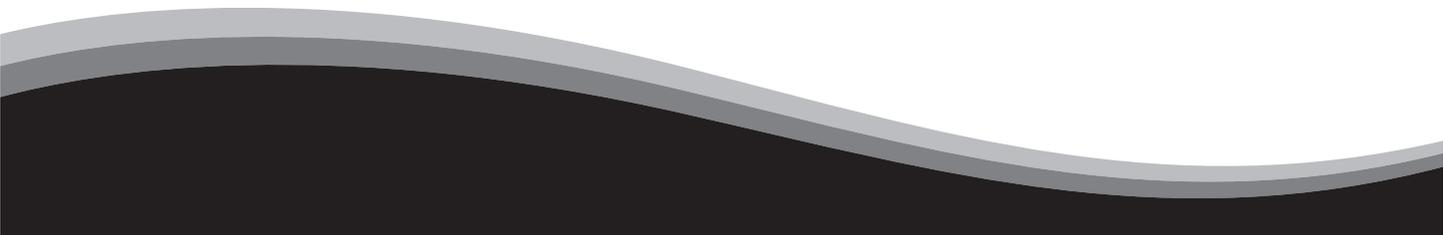
Continue exercises above trying to increase movement in all directions. Compare the movement to the other ankle. **Try to walk as normally as possible.**

### Balance:

Your foot helps you to balance. Once it is injured, it is weakened and liable to re-injury unless the balance mechanism is strengthened.

Once you are able to take weight on the leg, try balancing on the affected leg and increase this gradually until you can stand for 30 seconds at a time (hold onto something for balance).

Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Take support from a wall or chair. Lean your body forwards until you feel the stretching in the calf of the straight leg. Hold approximately 30 seconds – relax. **Repeat 3 times.**



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**At about 2 weeks:**

With equal weight on both feet, push up onto your toes and down again.

**Repeat 10 times.**

When you can do this comfortably, try pushing up on your toes on one leg at a time.

**Repeat 10 times on each leg.**

**NB.** These exercises should not increase your pain. Perform each exercise gently and slowly, only moving as far as feels comfortable. Practice each exercise up to 10 times, 2-3 times a day. If you feel the exercises are making your pain worse **stop doing them and seek advice.**

**Please contact your GP or NHS111 for any queries or concerns.**

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