



Calf injury

You have been treated in the Emergency Department with a calf injury. This leaflet gives advice on how to care for your injury at home.

Pain

Calf injuries are very painful. They are characterised by a sudden pain, popping or tearing sensation behind the lower leg. It is most commonly caused during sporting activity.

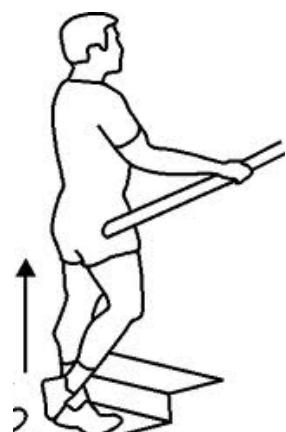
Your calf will be swollen, bruised, hot and painful particularly when putting your heel to the ground and walking.

Advice

- During the first 24 hours following your injury rest as much as possible with your leg raised to prevent further swelling.
- You can also try applying ice to the affected area (reduces the swelling and bleeding) for only 10-20 minutes at a time with at least 30 minutes in between to allow the limb to feel warm to the touch and have normal sensation before reapplying. Longer than this could result in tissue damage to the skin by frost bite or lack of blood flow. This process can be repeated several times per day. Wrap ice or frozen peas in a towel and apply to the affected area.
- It is also advisable to take regular painkillers during this period. If you are already taking medicines from your doctor please consult a pharmacist prior to taking any over the counter medicines.

After 24 hours

- It is important to exercise the injured muscle to prevent stiffness and weakness. This will be uncomfortable at first and you will benefit from taking painkillers.
- Do the exercises slowly and regularly. You will find that you experience an increase in pain when taking the first few steps after resting or first thing in the morning.
- If you find this exercise too painful with your knee straight, try with your knee bent initially. Once you can do this, draw the alphabet with your foot which will take your ankle (operated by the calf muscles) thorough their full range of movement.
- When you can stand on your leg more comfortably start doing stretching exercises to prevent shortening and stiffening of the muscle.
- Strengthening exercises can also be started to build up the injured muscle again. This one can be started with both legs and moving to just the injured leg as the muscle strengthens.



- Hold onto a firm support when doing this one.
Continue until calf muscles feel tired and repeat 3-4 times a day.
- If you are a member of a gym or have access to a physiotherapist via your GP or work they may be able to help you with these exercises.



Walking

Short walks are good for your healing muscle but avoid standing for long periods. You may find it more comfortable to wear a shoe with the higher heel to avoid stretching the calf fully.

Recovery

This leaflet gives general advice only; it may take 6-8 weeks for your calf to return to normal. If you are unable to move your ankle freely and without pain, you should not drive. Before returning to sport, ensure that your calf is pain-free, strong and supple. Remember to warm up gently prior to sporting activities to prevent further injury. If you have been given crutches or a stick, please return them to the Emergency Department as soon as possible. If you develop new symptoms or are concerned, see your GP or return to the Emergency Department.

Tell us your views

If you wish to discuss any aspect of your treatment and care, please speak to a senior member of staff or to the nurse looking after you. The matrons are also available during normal working hours and they welcome your views.

Friends and Family Test

Whatever your experience, you can give feedback by completing the Friends & Family test by going online www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/friends-and-family-test/ or using the link sent to you in an SMS text message.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Emergency Department.

Reviewed: December 2025

Next review due: December 2027