

Guide to stretching your calf muscles

Foot and Ankle Orthopaedic Service



Tightness of your calf muscles can contribute to foot and ankle problems. This leaflet provides exercise guidance recommended by your surgeon or physiotherapist that can reduce this tightness.

How to stretch your calf muscles

- Start by putting the foot of the leg to be stretched behind the other.



- Place something soft, such as a rolled flannel or sock, under the inside of your back foot arch as shown.



- Toes of both feet should be pointing forward.



- Rest your hands on the back of a chair or against a wall.

- Lean forward bringing your front knee towards the chair or wall.

- Keep your heels on the ground and the back knee straight.

- You should feel tightness in the calf muscle.



- Hold for 20 seconds.

- Relax and repeat up to 3 times in total.

- Repeating the stretches **3 to 4 times spread out over the day** is recommended.

Where can you view a video of the exercise?

There is a short demonstration video available via the following website link or QR scan code:

<https://is.gd/2hP66f>



How often should you do your stretches?

Try to do your exercises daily.

Some people find it useful to plan when they will do them. For example, before mealtimes.

How long should you do stretches?

Some people can see improvements within a few weeks of stretching, while others need to work at it for much longer.

It is important the stretches become part of your daily routine.

We recommend you keep up your exercises for **at least 3 to 4 months**.

Some people may choose to continue for longer if they have found them helpful.



What to do if your foot or ankle pain gets worse during or after stretches

It is common to experience some discomfort and we suggest you adjust to what feels comfortable for you.

Be aware that increases in pain during exercise are common and should settle down over time.

If the pain takes longer to settle than an hour or two then you could lessen the intensity of the stretch or reduce the length of time holding the stretch.

Some people find that their muscles and joints ache more after starting a new stretch or when increasing the number of repetitions. This is a normal response to doing difficult stretches and generally gets better over time with regular practice.



Notes:

If you have any concerns or problems with the exercise you should contact the healthcare professional who recommended it.

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net or telephone 01225 825656