



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Metatarsal fracture

(For patients who need  
a follow up appointment)

Physiotherapy department

Patient information



Location of a metatarsal fracture

## What is this information about?

This information is about a metatarsal fracture.

### It tells you:

- how to look after yourself when you go home from hospital with a metatarsal fracture
- what exercises you can do to help heal and strengthen your foot
- what follow-up treatment you might have
- who to contact if you need further help and support.

## What is a metatarsal fracture?

Metatarsal fracture is a break or a thin, hairline crack to one of the metatarsal bones of the foot. The metatarsal bones are five bones in the middle section of your foot. They are between your toe bones and the bones at the back of your foot near your ankle.

## Do I have a fracture or a break?

If you have a fracture, it means you have a broken bone. 'Fractured bone' and 'broken bone' both mean the same.

## How long is it likely to take for my injury to heal?

It usually takes around 6 weeks for metatarsal fractures to heal.

## Will smoking or vaping slow down my healing?

Yes. Smoking slows healing so if you smoke or vape try to stop or cut down. This is most important in the first 2 weeks after your injury. If you would like help to stop smoking talk to your GP or visit [Quit smoking-NHS www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/) for further information.

## What should I do if I am in pain after my metatarsal fracture?

You may have foot pain for 3 to 6 months after your injury. If you are in pain, take your usual pain killers or pain killers given to you in the emergency department. Follow the dose instructions on the packet. If you are struggling with pain, do speak to your GP or pharmacist.

## What should I do if I have a swollen foot after my metatarsal fracture?

You may have foot swelling for 3 to 6 months after your injury. Swelling is often worse at the end of the day. To reduce swelling that you may get soon after your injury:

- apply cold packs (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. This can provide short-term pain relief.

### Be aware

The ice must never be in direct contact with your skin.

- try to rest your foot, especially in the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). Raise your foot on a stool or cushions so that it is above the level of your hip.

## Can I walk after my metatarsal fracture?

Yes. You can walk on the foot as much as is comfortable. You may find crutches help to take some of the weight off your foot so that you can walk more comfortably.

### Be aware

if you have been given a boot or rigid sole shoe like those shown below, this is for your comfort only. It does not change how quickly or how well your fracture heals.

### Do

✓ take it off when you are not walking.



## Will I have further (follow up) appointments?

Yes. You will need to have a follow up appointment 6 weeks after your injury. A specialist will decide if further X-rays are required and will advise you on further injury management. You will be sent an appointment time and date by post, or you will be given a call if it is close to the appointment date.

## What should I do from week 1 to week 4 after my injury?

- Rest your foot for the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). Try to raise it above the level of your hips. For example, rest it on some pillows if you are lying down or a stool if you are sitting. This will help to reduce your swelling.

- Keep moving around and walk on the foot as much as is comfortable. If we have given you a boot or rigid sole shoe for comfort wear it when you are walking. You will need to use it for about 6 weeks. Take it off at night or when you are resting.
- Start doing the exercises shown below as soon as possible. Moving your foot and ankle as soon as you can after your injury helps your blood to circulate and reduces your chance of getting a Deep Vein Thrombosis (blood clot).
- Do these exercises about 5 times a day. Start straight away, working within your pain levels.

## Exercises



1. Point your foot up and down.  
**Repeat this 10 times.**



2. With your heels together, move your toes apart to turn your foot outwards.  
**Repeat this 10 times.**

Do not stretch so much that it hurts.





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

## What should I do from week 5 to week 6 after my injury?

- Continue wearing a boot or a rigid sole shoe for comfort when you are walking. You will need to use it for about 6 weeks.
- Remember, it is usual to still have mild discomfort and swelling at this stage. This may continue for 3 to 6 months.
- Slowly increase your day-to-day activity level.

### Be aware

you should avoid impact activity for 6 weeks.  
This includes running, jumping, and dancing.

## What should I do if I am struggling with my boot or my rigid sole shoe?

The boot and shoe have a thicker sole than your usual shoes. This can make you feel that your legs are uneven in length.

Make sure you wear a shoe or trainer on your uninjured foot that will support it. This will reduce stress on your other joints. If you need more advice, contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

## What should I do if have diabetes?

If you have diabetes there is a greater chance that pressure on your skin over a long period could cause skin ulcers. Wearing a boot or rigid sole shoe could cause pressure on your skin.

## Do

- ✓ Ask the Virtual Fracture Clinic for special boot care advice for people with diabetes if you have not had it already.
- ✓ Check the condition of your skin each day for any redness of your skin. If you have black or brown skin this may appear differently. It is even more important for you to check your skin if you have dry or itchy skin or other skin problems.
- ✓ Contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic if you notice any changes in your skin colour.

We can give you advice or arrange for your foot to be checked in the plaster room if you need that.

## What other things can the Virtual Fracture Clinic help me with?

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic if you:

- are concerned about your symptoms
- are struggling to return to exercise or your usual activities
- would like further information or support after you have read this information.

## When can I start driving?

You can return to driving when:

- you are no longer using your boot or rigid sole shoe
- you can walk comfortably
- you can safely deal with all emergency situations without being in pain or hesitating. For example, you must be able to stop the car quickly and in full control and safely avoid obstacles
- you are covered by your insurance company.

### Be aware

always try driving in a safe place first.

## How can I get a certificate to say that I am fit to work?

You can get a fitness for work statement from the Virtual Fracture Clinic.

## What do I do with my ankle boot, rigid sole show, and crutches when I no longer need them?

### Please do

✓ return your crutches to the Virtual Fracture Clinic or A&E.

### Do not

✗ return boots or shoes to the hospital. We are unable to reuse them.

## How do I contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic?

Working hours: Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. We aim to respond to messages within 24 hours during these times.

At times you may receive a call outside of these hours.

### Worthing

01903 205111 Ext. 86312

[uhsussex.vfc@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.vfc@nhs.net)

### St Richards

01243 788122 Ext. 35503

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This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care in St Richard's Hospital and Worthing Hospital.

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