

## When can I return to my normal activities?

Everyone recovers from an injury at a different rate. Return to your activities will be determined by how soon your toe recovers, not by how many days or weeks it has been since your injury occurred.

The goal of rehabilitation is to return you to your normal activities as soon as possible. If you return too soon you may worsen your injury.

You may safely return to your normal activity when you can walk straight ahead without pain or limping.

## For further advice please contact:

Abingdon MIU	01865 903 476
Henley MIU	01865 903 755
Witney MIU	01865 903 841
Wallingford FAU	01865 903 471
Bicester FAU	01865 903 976

*MIU: minor injury unit*

*FAU: first aid unit*

## Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

If you need the information in another language or format please ask us

Nëse ky informacion ju nevojitet në një gjuhë apo format tjetër, ju lutem na kontaktoni

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若您需要本信息的另一种语言或格式的文本，请与我们联系

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Urgent care is provided by our Older People Directorate.

OP 141.15



Urgent care

## Broken toes

## How do broken toes occur?

A broken toe can occur in several ways. Broken toes are commonly caused by a direct hit, such as kicking a hard object or something landing on the toe.

A toe can also break from a twisting type injury. If you play a sport where you don't wear shoes (for example martial arts, ballet, gymnastics) you are at an increased risk of toe injury.

## What are the symptoms?

- pain, swelling and tenderness
- difficulty walking or running
- toe may turn black and blue
- bleeding or discolouration underneath the toenail
- toenail may fall off

## Diagnosis and treatment

A fracture can only be diagnosed by X-ray. However, if the toe is in normal alignment (i.e. not bent of our normal position) then an X-ray will generally not be taken, unless it is your big toe.

The treatment for a broken toe is the same as the treatment for a bruised toe and therefore giving radiation is deemed unnecessary.

Usually the injured toe is taped to the toe directly next to it if this is comfortable. Treatment will also involve rest, ice and elevation.

**Rest:** you need to rest your foot with the injured toe, with minimal weight-bearing initially.

**Ice:** during the first 48 hours post-injury, it is recommended that you use cold rather than heat. You can use ice packs or frozen peas applied over a thin piece of material to your toe. Do not apply it directly to the skin. Do this for five to ten minutes, three to four times a day.

**Elevation:** raising the injured foot above the height of your heart helps to decrease the amount of swelling, therefore aiding healing. This may not be possible but raising it above the height of your hip can help. In bed, place a pillow underneath the mattress in order to raise your feet. It is more comfortable than putting the pillow directly under your foot.

**Analgesia:** adequate pain control is essential to allow gentle mobilisation and decrease swelling. Simple painkillers like paracetamol and ibuprofen are recommended and may be taken together if needed. Always check that you are able to take medication prior to consumption.

If your toenail is loose and has not yet fallen off, keep a plaster around it. The new one will grow and push the old one out.

## How long do the effects last?

It usually takes four to six weeks for a broken toe to heal, although symptoms may last longer than this.

If the fracture goes into a joint your toe may continue to feel stiff and can lose some range of motion. Sometimes a toe may become shorter after a fracture.