

Foot Strains

A foot strain is an injury to a muscle or tendon, the tissue that joins muscle to bone. It may follow a sudden force or repeated loading. Pain, weakness, swelling, or bruising can make walking uncomfortable.

Do not assume all foot pain is a strain

Ligament injuries and fractures can cause similar symptoms. Seek prompt assessment if you cannot walk more than a few steps, the pain is severe, or swelling is increasing. A deformed foot or new coldness, color change, or numbness needs emergency evaluation.

Protect the foot

Pause the activity that triggered the pain. Supportive footwear, a wrapped cold pack, and raising the foot may help early symptoms. Your clinician can advise whether a support or walking aid is needed. Ask a pharmacist or clinician which pain medicine is suitable for you.

Return to activity in stages

As pain settles, gentle movement and a guided strengthening plan can help restore function. Avoid pushing through sharp pain or returning straight to running and jumping. A more severe tear may need specialist care.

Have persistent or worsening symptoms checked. At follow-up, ask which work tasks and exercises are safe and what should happen before you resume sport.

Related reading

- Ankle Sprains
- Stress Fractures

Sources and further information

- AAOS: Sprains, strains and soft-tissue injuries
- NHS: Sprains and strains

This handout provides general education. Your treating clinician can explain how it applies to your injury.