



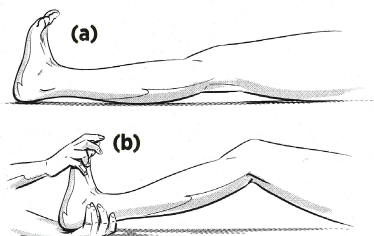
Flex and point

Do your ankles rankle?

This month, podiatrist Nicola Blower (walkrite.co.uk) outlines the benefits of ankle flexibility.

WHY DO IT? If you lack ankle flexibility you may compensate by rolling your foot in or out more, or lifting the heel off the ground earlier, says Blower. This can lead to pain in the ankle and foot, and overuse or deactivation of the peroneal tendons (which run behind the outer ankle bone) and the tibialis posterior (which runs down the leg and under the foot), as well as the Achilles.

THE TEST Sit on the floor, legs straight. Testing one leg at a time, keep your knee straight and dorsiflex the ankle (draw foot towards shin) as far as you can **(a)**. Get a friend to hold your foot while you bend your knee slightly **(b)**. Will the ankle bend further with a little pressure?

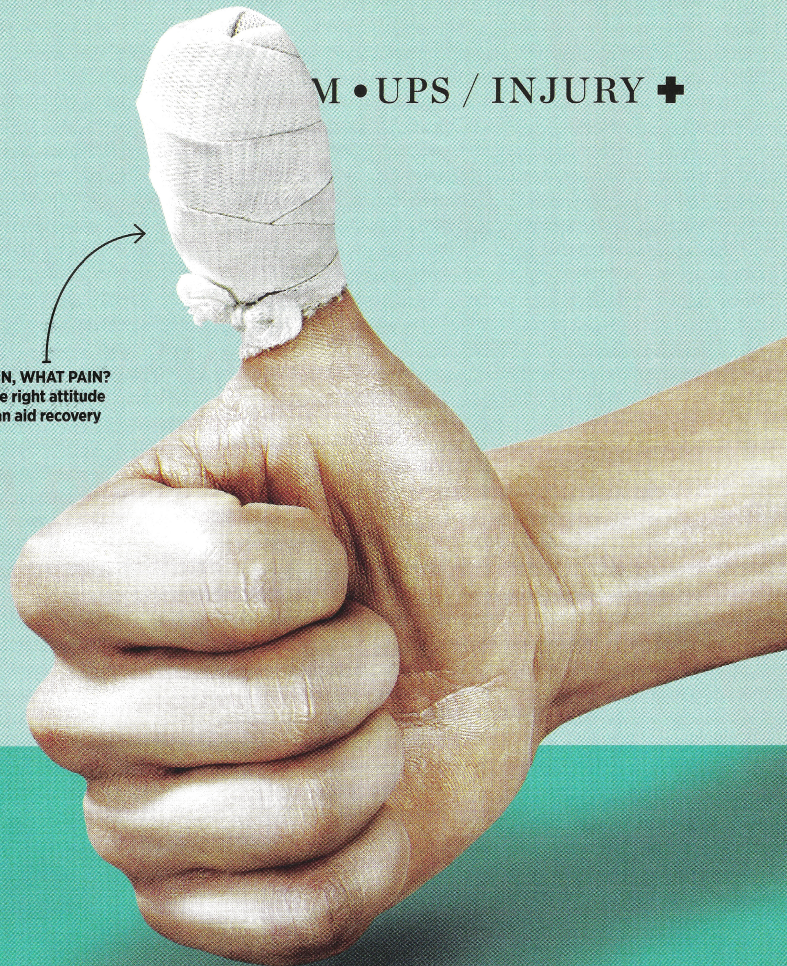


WHAT TO LOOK FOR **1** When the knee is straight, your ankle should bend to 100 degrees. If you have to bend the knee, you have tight upper calf (gastrocnemius) muscles. **2** If you can't reach 100 degrees even with the knee bent, you have tight soleus (lower calf) muscles. **3** If dorsiflexing with the knee bent causes pain at the front of the ankle, you may have a bony impingement at the ankle joint.

HOW TO IMPROVE For tightness of the gastrocnemius, do calf stretches with straight knees. Hold for 30 secs and repeat 3-5 times per side. To improve soleus flexibility, calf-stretch, but keep the knee bent to about 40 degrees, heel down. Reps and sets as above. You can't stretch a bony impingement, but Blower advises opting for running shoes with more of a heel raise.

M • UPS / INJURY +

PAIN, WHAT PAIN?
The right attitude
can aid recovery



I FEEL FINE!

How sore you feel after exercise can depend in part on your attitude to pain. In a study¹, athletes who scored highly on questionnaires measuring fear of pain rated their pain levels higher 24 and 48 hours after a hard workout. In rehab, 'over-experiencing' pain may result in an injured runner avoiding normal activity, which delays the healing process.

Degrees of discomfort

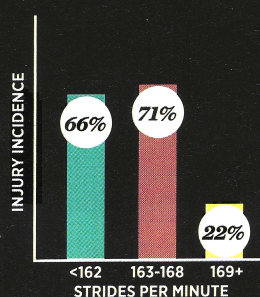
Is your pain a warning? Physiotherapist Tom Goom (thephysiorooms.com) can help you decide

- Delayed-onset muscle soreness (DOMS) eases in a few days with no treatment.
- Pain in a tendon, bone or joint may be of concern, especially if it lasts more than 24 hours.
- Pain you'd rate up to a 'three out of 10' is usually nothing serious if it settles quickly.
- Pain you rate higher, or that lingers or recurs each time you run, needs attention.

Cadence counts

Step it up to avoid injury

When researchers² monitored cadence among a group of runners training for a half marathon, they found a link between stride rates of less than 169 per minute and an increased risk of injury. Try to increase your stride rate to 169 steps per minute or higher to reduce your risk.



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AVERAGE GAP (IN MONTHS) BETWEEN INJURIES, IN A STUDY OF 600 ATHLETES.³