Ankle fracture
Advice for patients following removal of cast

After your cast has been removed
When the cast is first removed the foot or ankle may feel stiff or swollen. This is because your ankle has been still for a number of weeks. It does not indicate that the bones are still damaged.

Keeping a joint still for a period of time will lead to the muscles, joints and ligaments feeling tighter but this is necessary to allow the bones to heal.

Your consultant may ask you to keep using your crutches for a number of weeks to manage the pain while getting your weight back onto the ankle.

If your ankle is still swollen or stiff after the cast has been removed
A regime of MICE is recommended.

M – Movement
Gentle movement exercises will prevent the limb from becoming stiff. Some gentle exercises are advised on this information leaflet, it is recommended you do them four times a day. The exercises can produce pulling and mildly achy sensations. If you experience sharp or shooting pains seek further advice.

I – Ice

C – Compression

E – Elevation

Heat and ice
You may find that by immersing your foot in a bath of warm water it is easier to move your ankle. You may like to try doing your exercises in this way. If the skin around your ankle feels normal, ice can be used to reduce your pain and act as a local anaesthetic after completing your exercises. Simply wrap an ice pack or bag of frozen peas in a damp towel and apply for 10-20 minutes. Make sure you check your skin regularly to prevent burns.

Pain relief
If necessary, pain can be eased by medication. Discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

Dry skin
Often people find that their skin is dry and scaly once the plaster is removed. Massaging a simple moisturiser or baby oil frequently onto the skin after washing will improve this.
The following exercises should be repeated 10 times 3-4 times a day or as pain allows.

1. Ankle pumps
Move your foot up and down as far as you can.

2. Towel Stretch
Sit with your injured leg straight out in front of you. Place a towel around your foot. Use the towel to help pull your foot up towards you, feeling a slight stretch in your calf. Hold for 20-30 seconds.

As you improve, start the following exercises:

1. Sitting with your feet on the floor, roll your feet to face inwards and out.
2. Stand with the toes of your injured foot touching the wall, and heel on the floor. Stretch your knee forwards to touch the wall. Ensure you keep your heel on the floor. Hold for 20-30 seconds.

3. Stand on both feet, rise up onto your toes, then slowly lower your heels back down. Make sure you have something stable to hold onto such as a kitchen surface or table.

What to expect
- It is normal to feel some discomfort when moving your foot or ankle initially, but this will reduce with time.
- It is important to remember that you have had a fracture and that your leg will not return to normal immediately after the plaster is removed.
- You may notice a lump or bump at your ankle. This is part of the healing process as extra bone is laid down to heal the fracture. With time this is often re-absorbed but sometimes the different shape may
Physiotherapy
If your doctor feels it is necessary you may be referred to physiotherapy.

If any of the exercises or advice in this leaflet causes your symptoms to worsen please stop the activity and seek advice