

# ANKLE OSTEOARTHRITIS

## TIPS & TRICKS

DR STEVEN KENT - FOOT, ANKLE & TRAUMA SURGEON.  
SUITE 10, LEVEL 1, 235 DARBY ST, COOKS HILL, NSW, 2300.  
PH: (02) 4911 2303 FAX: (02) 4006 3081



## COMMON PITFALLS

Radiographs often underestimate symptoms – **clinical findings** and functional limitations matter more.

Many patients will be asymptomatic for a considerable period of time then suffer in an injury, resulting in **prolonged** and **intractable symptoms**

Ankle osteoarthritis has been shown to be **equally or more disabling** than hip/knee OA, especially in younger, active patients.

## INJURY PROFILE & HISTORY

Peak age group = 40-65 years old

Unlike hip/knee OA, most ankle OA is post-traumatic (~70%)

Symptoms: chronic ankle swelling, deep ache, **reduced dorsiflexion**, morning stiffness

Patients report increasing difficulty with stairs, **uneven ground**, or prolonged walking/standing



## EXAMINATION

- Reduced range of motion – especially dorsiflexion
- Bony tenderness across joint line (especially **anterior joint**).
- Thickening of joint margins; often **valgus** or **varus** deformity present.



## IMAGING

Weight-bearing ankle X-rays: AP, mortise, lateral (weight-bearing X-rays are **essential** as non-weight bearing film may miss arthritis and deformity)

If the **weight-bearing ankle X-ray** is unremarkable and osteoarthritis is *strongly suspected* then an **MRI** is recommended as this will identify subtle osteoarthritic change not evident on X-ray

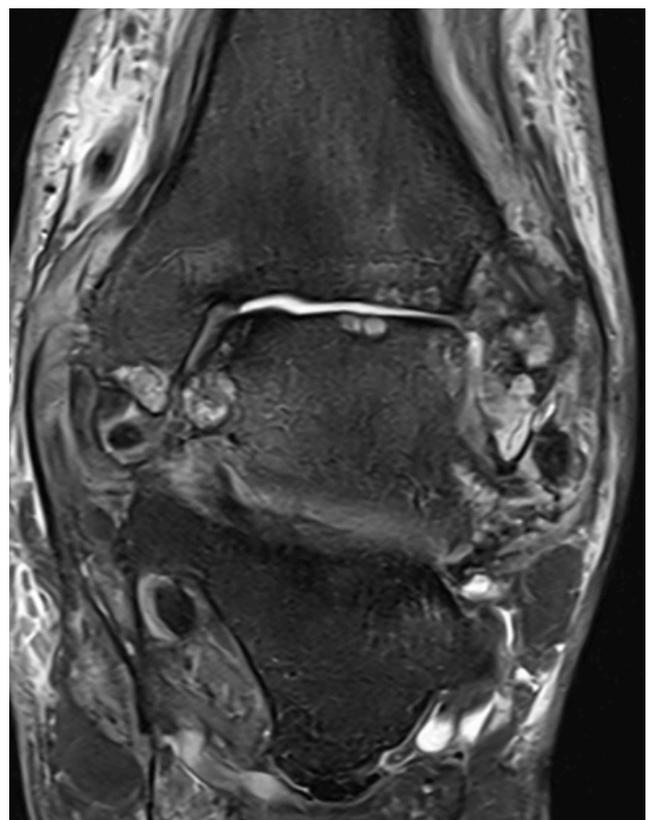
## WHAT SHOULD I DO

Regular NSAID (have been shown to provide the most effective pain relief for osteoarthritic pain)

Gym-based lower limb strength exercises (consider exercise physiology referral)

Consider referral to a podiatrist for an **off-loading orthotic** if deformity present

If symptoms are **persistent** despite the above measures and are significantly impairing the patient's function then consider **referral to an orthopaedic surgeon**



## General Practitioner Cheat Sheets

Scan the **QR code** to access GP Information Sheets  
on common foot & ankle presentations



Syndesmosis  
(AITFL)  
Injuries



Lisfranc  
Injuries



Achilles  
Tendon  
Rupture



Low Ankle  
Sprain (ATFL  
Injury)



Anterior  
Calcaneal  
Process  
Fracture



Ankle  
Replacement  
vs  
Ankle Fusion

## REFERENCES

- Fanelli D, Mercurio M, Castioni D, Sanzo V, Gasparini G, Galasso O. End-stage ankle osteoarthritis: arthroplasty offers better quality of life than arthrodesis with similar complication and re-operation rates-an updated meta-analysis of comparative studies. *Int Orthop*. 2021;45(9):2177-2191. doi:10.1007/s00264-021-05053-x
- Glazebrook M, Balasubramaniam U, Walls A, et al. Outcomes of Total Ankle Replacement Versus Ankle Arthrodesis for the Treatment of End-Stage Ankle Arthritis: A Concise Follow-up, at a Minimum of 10 Years, of a Previous Report. *J Bone Joint Surg Am*. 2025;107(6):552-557. doi:10.2106/JBJS.24.00361