

Ankle Sprains

Ankle sprains are by far the most common injury in sports. An ankle sprain can occur by a twisting type injury causing the ankle to turn inward or outward. This motion stretches the ligaments around the ankle joint. (Ligaments are bands of tissue that attach bone to bone.) The ligaments along with muscles and tendons around the ankle give stability to the joint.

Some symptoms of a sprained ankle include:

- 1.Pain
- 2.Swelling
- 3.Bruising
- 4.Stiffness

All of these symptoms combined may make walking impossible. Usually there is no pain when palpating the bones of the ankle (Tibia, Fibula and Talus). If pain is present over the bones this suggests that there may be further injury to the ankle.

Ankle sprains are diagnosed by your orthopedist. X-rays are obtained to ensure that there is no fracture of the bones that make up the ankle joint.

Treatment and recovery from the injury will depend on the severity of the sprain. Sprains are graded: **I** being minimal damage to the ligaments. **II** moderate injury. **III** tearing of the ligaments causing the joint to be loose.

Initial treatment usually includes the following:

RICE

Rest:

Crutches may be needed for ambulation due to pain. Also immobilization may be necessary, using an air cast, removable boot or cast.

Ice:

This should be applied for 20 minutes every 2 hours for the first 2-3 days. Always apply at least a paper towel over the skin before applying ice to avoid a burn. A frozen bag of peas or reusable gel pack can be used as a substitute for ice.

Compression:

Wrapping an ace bandage starting from the toes and following up the leg will help to reduce the swelling in the ankle.

Elevation:

Keeping the ankle on pillows above the level of the heart will also help to reduce swelling.

**The second phase of treatment for an ankle sprain is:

Rehabilitation Exercises:

Range of Motion:

Either sitting or laying down draw the alphabet with your foot. Do this twice.

Towel Stretches:

While seated with your legs extended in front of you – put a towel around the ball of your foot and gently pull towards your body until you feel a stretch behind your ankle. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times. Repeat on opposite leg.

Standing Calf Stretch:

While facing a wall put both hands up against it – put your injured leg behind you and your uninjured leg bent in front of you. Lean forward until you feel a stretch behind your ankle. Hold this for 10 seconds, repeat 10 times. Repeat on opposite leg. (Never bounce with any stretching exercise.)

Isometric Exercises:

While seated find a stationary object, such as the leg of a table or an opening of a doorway. Push your foot inward against the object and hold for 10 seconds - repeat 3 sets of 10 repetitions. Now with the same ankle but use the lateral or outside of your foot to push against the fixed object.

Heel Raises:

Stand behind a chair to balance yourself. Slowly raise up on both of your heels and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat this for 3 sets of 10 repetitions.

Balancing:

As your ankle is getting stronger you can begin this exercise. Stand by a wall, for balance. Put all your weight on the injured ankle and lift the heel. Lift opposite leg up in the air so you are balancing on one leg. Hold for 10 seconds repeat 10 times. Alternate between legs.

Returning to sports or activities require:

1. Full range of motion of the ankle has returned.
2. Full strength.
3. You must be able to sprint straight ahead and cut on different angles.
4. Continue strengthening exercises.
5. A supportive ankle brace or taping is recommended following severe or recurrent sprains. (E.g. Air Splint; Lace Up; Active Ankle)