

ANKLE PAIN

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Ankle sprain is the most common athletic injury and involves stretching and possibly tearing of ligaments around the ankle. Nearly 85% of ankle sprains occur laterally, or on the outside of ankle joint, when you 'roll' your ankle.

Many sprains occur when participating in sports, or by twisting the ankle when walking on an uneven surface. Some individuals, due to their bone structure or foot type, are more prone to ankle sprains.

Symptoms vary depending on the severity of the sprain. Often, the ankle is tender, swollen and discolored. The ankle can be quite painful to touch. Initially walking is usually painful, the degree of the pain usually depends on the severity of the sprain. A feeling of instability may occur, especially in severe ankle sprains when ligaments are torn.

CLASSIFICATIONS

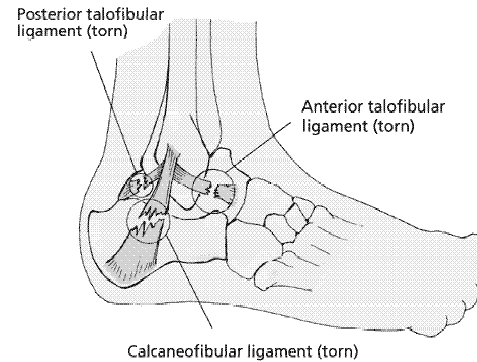
Ankle sprains can be divided into several classifications:

TYPE I Ankle sprain is the least severe and occurs when ligament fibers have been stretched or slightly torn.

TYPE II Sprain occurs when some of the fibers of the injured ligaments are completely torn.

TYPE III Is the most severe and occurs when the entire ligament is torn and there is significant instability of the ankle joint.

You should see a physiotherapist as soon as possible after injury. In more severe cases it may be better not to walk on the ankle, so crutches may be recommended.



TREATMENT

If you have an ankle sprain the first thing you should do is “**RICE**”, which helps to decrease swelling and pain, and kick-starts the healing process.

Rest: Try to keep off the injured ankle in the first few days, and only do gentle range of motion exercises, like ankle circles.

Ice: Wrap the injured ankle in a cold pack, or ice pack. Never put cold plastic directly on your skin, cover the pack with a moist towel. Never leave ice on for more than 15 minutes at a time, and make sure

you have good sensation in the area, so you don't freeze your skin by accident!

Compression: You can gently wrap the ankle with an elastic 'tensor' type bandage, making the bandage tighter at your toes, and looser as you go up your foot and lower leg. A tape job applied by your physiotherapist can also make your ankle feel supported, decrease swelling, and make walking more comfortable in the early stages.

Elevation: When you're not up and around, elevate your injured ankle on a foot stool or chair. This will decrease swelling as it stops the fluid from pooling around your injured ankle.

As your initial symptoms decrease, your physiotherapist will increase your activity level slowly. You will start to do more range of motion and weight bearing exercises, including balance or 'proprioception' exercises. It is essential that you rehabilitate your sense of proprioception, to decrease the chance of having another sprain.

Most ankle sprains heal in three to eight weeks. In more severe cases, ligaments may require more healing time to promote ankle stability. Repeated ankle sprains may cause chronic instability, interfering with walking or sports activities. In extreme cases surgical stabilization may be required, but in general a good brace, which can be recommended to you by your physiotherapist, can decrease the chance of re-injury.