

Ankle Sprain Overview

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is the injury that occurs when your foot “rolls,” or turns in on itself. In this injury, the ligaments that hold the ankle and foot bones in place are stretched and weakened.

Ligaments are strong tissues around joints, which attach bones together. (See picture below) They give support to joints. A ligament can be injured, usually by being stretched during a sudden pull. The ligaments at the side of the ankle are the ones most commonly sprained.

A damaged ligament causes inflammation, swelling, and bleeding (bruising) around the affected joint. Movement of the ankle joint is painful when you have a sprained ankle.

The severity of a sprain is graded into:

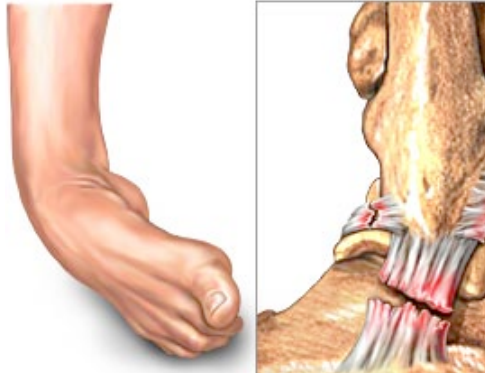
Grade I - mild stretching of the ligament without joint instability.



Grade II - partial rupture (tear) of the ligament but without causing joint instability (or with mild instability of the joint).



Grade III - complete rupture (tear) of the ligament with instability of the joint. Sometimes this is simply called a severe ankle sprain.



What should I do after an ankle sprain?

Many doctors recommend that you use the PRICE treatment after a sprain:

P = Protect the injured ankle from further injury. An ankle brace, or ankle support or bandage may help with this. (View HN Health Solution to buy ankle brace online).

A lace-up shoe or boot with high sides is also protective.

R = Rest. Stay off the injured ankle. This helps it heal and also helps prevent further injury. Your doctor might have you use crutches if walking is too painful. Stay off your feet most of the time until you can walk without pain.

I = Ice. Ice helps keep the swelling down. It also helps reduce pain. Put an ice pack on the ankle for 15 minutes. Take the ice off for 10 minutes. Put ice back on for 10 minutes. Then use ice for 15 minutes at a time, 3 times a day, for 2 more days.

C = Compression. Compression (wrapping the ankle with a strip of elastic cloth) will help decrease swelling and support your ankle. You can use an elastic wrap from the drug store or get an air splint from your doctor. (Your doctor will show you how to use it.) Be careful not to wrap the ankle too tightly. This would slow the blood flow to your foot. Use the elastic bandage for 1 to 2 days.

E = Elevation. Keeping your foot raised helps decrease pain and swelling. When you elevate your ankle, try to keep it at the level of your heart. Lying on a couch

with pillows under your foot is better than sitting in a chair with your foot on a footstool. Try to keep your foot elevated for 2 to 3 hours a day.

What can I take for pain?

Most doctors recommend anti-inflammatory medicines such as ibuprofen (ask your pharmacist for brand), naproxen, or ketoprofen. You can also take acetaminophen for pain although this medicine is not an anti-inflammatory.

After my ankle sprain heals, what can I do to strengthen my ankle?

It's important for you to strengthen your ankle after a sprain. This helps prevent another injury from occurring.

Use elastic tubing (available at HN Health Solutions) and follow a few basic exercises described on the next page.

Do each exercise 10 times (this is called a "set"); do 3 sets of each exercise, twice a day. For example, in the morning, you'll do 40 repetitions (4 exercises, 10 times each) 3 times. In the evening, you'll do another 40 repetitions 3 times.

Note: The strengthening exercises are based on generic information – we do recommend that a physiotherapist or biokineticist be consulted for in depth information.

Exercises After an Ankle Sprain

- Sit on a firm chair or stand up. Loop one end of the tubing around the ball of the foot with the injured ankle. Hold the other end of the tubing in your hand. Put your heel on the floor. Stretch the tubing by pushing down with your foot, the way you push on the gas pedal of a car.
- Sit on a firm chair or stand up. Loop one end of the tubing around the leg of a sturdy table. Loop the other end of the tubing around the foot with the injured ankle. Stretch the tubing by pulling up with your foot (lifting up your foot), using your ankle, as if you were trying to pull the table toward you. (This motion is the opposite of trying to "step on the gas.")
- Sit on a firm chair or stand up. Loop one end of the tubing around the leg of a sturdy table. Loop the other end of the tubing around the foot with the injured ankle. Stretch the tubing by moving your foot out to the side, away from the leg of the table.
- Sit on a firm chair or stand up. Loop one end of the tube around the leg of a sturdy table. Loop the other end of the tubing around the foot with the injured ankle. Stretch the tubing by moving your foot to the middle,

toward your good ankle.

You can also do these exercises with your uninjured ankle, to keep it strong.

What can I do to help prevent another ankle sprain?

- Wear flat shoes instead of high heels.
- When playing sports, wear a lace-up ankle support (brace) for added protection. (Ask your Orthotist about ankle brace for specific sports)
- If you don't like lace-up ankle braces, wear an elastic slip-on support. (It won't be as protective as the lace-up ankle brace.)
- Don't stop doing the ankle exercises after your ankle feels better. Keep doing the exercises several times a week to keep your ankles strong.