

## Ankle sprain

Ankle sprain is a common sports injury but also happen during everyday activities. An unnatural twisting motion of the ankle joint can happen when the foot is planted awkwardly, when the ground is uneven, or when an unusual amount of force is applied to the joint.



## Symptoms

- Swelling: Due to increased fluid in the tissue, this is sometimes severe.
- Pain: The nerves are more sensitive. The joint hurts and may throb. The pain can worsen when the sore area is pressed or the foot moves in certain directions (depending upon which ligament is involved) and during walking or standing.
- Redness and warmth: caused by increased blood flow to the area

## Diagnosis

The doctor will perform a physical exam to see if a fracture or other serious injury has happened that requires immediate care. The doctor will handle and move the foot and ankle to determine what bony areas are involved. X-rays are often needed to confirm if a fracture is present. In some cases, a MRI or CT scan may be needed.

## Treatment

Depending on severity (grade) of ankle sprain, treatment course and recovery might take from 3 weeks up to even 3-4 months. Almost all ankle sprains heal on their own with proper treatment and rehabilitation (rehab) exercises.

Surgery to repair torn ligaments is usually only considered when there is a severe ligament tear (or tears) or if the ankle remains unstable after rehab. Surgery is also a consideration if you have broken a bone.

Initial treatment for an ankle sprain is summarized as the PRINCE approach:

- **Protection.** The doctor may elect to apply a brace or cast to reduce motion of the ankle. Crutches are sometimes provided so the patient does not bear weight on the injured ankle
- **Rest.** Try to avoid sports or any physical activity which provokes the pain.
- **Ice.** For the first 3 days or until swelling goes down, apply an ice pack for 10 to 20 minutes every 1 to 2 hours during the day. After 3 days, you can continue with ice or try contrast baths up to 10 days.
- **NSAIDs - nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or acetaminophen.** Doctor may prescribe some medicines that alleviate symptoms of ankle sprain.
- **Compression.** If no brace is applied, an elastic compression wrap will help decrease swelling. Don't apply the wrap too tightly. Loosen the bandage if it gets too tight. Compression wraps do not offer protection, except by reminding you to be careful of your ankle.
- **Elevation.** Raise your ankle above the level of your heart for 2 to 3 hours a day if possible to decrease swelling and bruising.

## Prevention

Ankle sprain prevention can be as simple as wearing the right shoes or as complicated as balance training for athletes.

- Wear proper shoes for the activity. Always wear stable shoes that give your ankle proper support. High-top basketball shoes are a good choice. (High heels or platform shoes are not the best choice if you're trying to prevent an ankle sprain.)
- Keep the ankles strong and flexible. Consult with physical therapist for strengthening exercises.
- When participating in a sport, consider having a weak ankle taped, as taping offers extra support. If you have repeated sprains, wearing an ankle brace while playing may help.
- Make sure a playing field (or home environment) is clear of any holes or obstacles to help avoid injury.