



## Sprained Ankle<sup>1</sup>

A sprained ankle occurs following a sudden sideways or twisting movement of the foot. An ankle sprain can occur during athletic events or during everyday activities. All it takes is an awkward step or an uneven surface to cause an ankle sprain--that is why sprained ankles are among the most common orthopedic injuries. Orthopedic doctors see patients for ankle sprains very often, and it is the most common foot and ankle injury.<sup>2</sup>

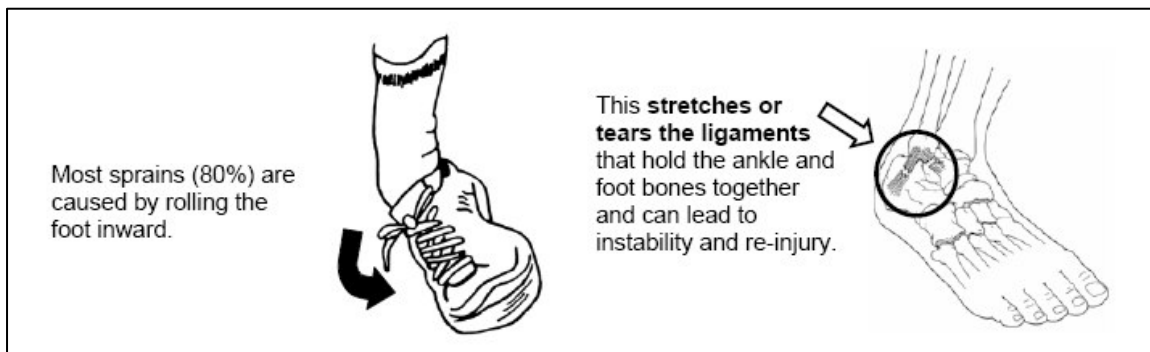


Fig.1 McKinley Health Center. <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/Handouts/anklesprain/anklesprain.htm>

## Treatment Options

Depending on the severity of the injury an ankle sprain generally takes about four to six weeks to heal. It is extremely important to allow a period of protection during which the ankle can heal properly. Usually the swelling and pain will only last 2-3 days but this does not mean that the ligament tear has completely healed. It may be necessary to use crutches or a removable castboot or airsplint to ensure the ankle is properly immobilized.

All ankle sprains recover in three phases:

### Phase 1- One week

Includes resting, protecting the ankle and reducing the swelling (one week). In phase 1 use R.I.C.E. (rest, ice, compression and elevation)

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. Sprained Ankle. [http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/fact/thr\\_report.cfm?thread\\_id=152&topcategory=Foot](http://orthoinfo.aaos.org/fact/thr_report.cfm?thread_id=152&topcategory=Foot). March 2005

<sup>2</sup> Cluett, Jonathan. About Orthopaedics. What is a Sprained Ankle? <http://orthopedics.about.com/cs/sprainsstrains/a/anklesprain.htm>. 2006

1. **Rest** your ankle by not walking on it.
2. **Ice** should be immediately applied. It keeps the swelling down. It can be used for 20 minutes to 30 minutes, three or four times daily. Combine ice with wrapping to decrease swelling, pain and dysfunction.
3. **Compression** dressings, bandages or ace-wraps immobilize and support the injured ankle.
4. **Elevate** your ankle above your heart level for 48 hours

### **Phase 2- One to Two Weeks**

Includes restoring range of motion, strength and flexibility (one week to two weeks). Rehabilitation is used to help to decrease pain and swelling and to prevent chronic ankle problems. Ultrasound and electrical stimulation may also be used as needed to help with pain and swelling. At first, rehabilitation exercises may involve active range of motion or controlled movements of the ankle joint without resistance. Lower extremity exercises and endurance activities are added as tolerated. Once you are pain-free, other exercises may be added, such as agility drills. The goal is to increase strength and range of motion as balance improves over time.

***Your Physiotherapist can help you create a program to help you get back to your regular routine as quickly as possible!***

### **Phase 3- Weeks to Months**

Includes gradually returning to activities that do not require turning or twisting the ankle and doing maintenance exercises. This will be followed by being able to do activities that require sharp, sudden turns such as tennis, basketball or soccer.

If necessary non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may be used to control pain and inflammation.

### **Risk Factors/Prevention**

The best way to prevent ankle sprains is to maintain good strength, muscle balance and flexibility.

- Warm-up before doing exercises and vigorous activities
- Pay attention to walking, running or working surfaces
- Wear good shoes
- Pay attention to your body's warning signs to slow down when you feel pain or fatigue