

Ankle sprains

Sprains of the ankles are the most common sports injuries. About 90% of all ankle sprains occur when the foot is rapidly turned inward (inversion sprain). The result is an excessive pull on the ligaments on the outside of the ankle that connect the fibula (one of the two lower leg bones) to the ankle and heel bones. The severity of this pull or stretch on the ligaments determines the severity of the injury. Ankle sprains may range from mild (minimal ligament stretching) to severe (torn ligaments).

Ankle sprains rarely occur on the inside of the ankle. Another rare injury is the "high ankle sprain." This usually occurs when the top of the foot is violently forced upward (toward the knee) and damages the ligaments connecting the two lower leg bones (tibia and fibula). Such injuries are generally much more serious and require medical attention.

The ankle is swollen and painful following an ankle sprain. Depending on the severity, normal ankle motion and normal weightbearing/walking may or may not be possible. Bruising in the ankle and foot may be evident up to a week after the injury. Generally, a physician will request x-rays to rule out fractures. Crutches may be needed for walking if significant limping is evident. First aid for an ankle sprain follows the well-known R.I.C.E. principle:

- R. Rest—take body weight off of the injured leg
- I. Ice—to relieve pain and control swelling
- C. Compression—with elastic bandage to prevent swelling
- E. Elevation—of the injured leg above heart level to prevent swelling

Following an ankle sprain, proper rehabilitation is necessary to minimize pain, stiffness, and swelling and to regain lost range of motion, strength, joint stability, and function. The sooner rehabilitation is begun the more rapid and complete the recovery. Oftentimes, a person suffering an ankle sprain ends up injuring the ankle again. Ankle instability diminishes a person's confidence in his/her ankle for support, especially on uneven ground. This creates a tendency for the ankle to twist again very easily.

The above is intended as general information only. Be sure to contact your physician for advice on your own specific medical problems.