



## Ankle Sprain

### What is it?

A sprain is an injury to a ligament. Most commonly the ligament on the lateral (outside) aspect of the foot is damaged in an ankle sprain, less commonly the ligament on the inside of the ankle can be injured. Generally only a small percentage of the fibres that make up the ligament are damaged and whilst it can be very uncomfortable the ligament remains intact.

### Symptoms

The first sensation after a lateral ligament sprain is pain on the outside and front of the ankle. There may also be an audible snap, crack or tear. Depending on the severity of the injury, the ankle may swell and you may have difficulty walking due to pain. Swelling may be immediate or may occur over a period of hours. The ankle may also feel weak. Bruising may develop which can extend up the leg and down to the toes.

### What causes it?

Ligaments are injured when they are overstretched (sprained). This commonly occurs when the foot and ankle are forcibly to the side. This injury is often referred to as a 'rolled ankle'. The ankle may be rolled during rapid changes in direction, on uneven surfaces, or treading on a ball or opponents foot or a simple "trip" whilst walking.

### What should you do?

The aims of treatment are to keep inflammation, swelling, and pain to a minimum, and to be able to use the joint normally again as quickly as possible. To limit the severity of the injury, stop the activity immediately and start initial treatment. Treatment of a sprain for the first 48 - 72 hours, think of **P R I C E D**

- **P**rotect the joint by stopping the aggravating activity and reducing pressure through the joint. Strapping, bracing or crutches may be required depending on the severity of the injury.
- **R**est the affected joint for 48 hours after injury
- **I**ce should be applied as soon as possible after injury for 10 minutes, and then repeated every 1-2 hours. Make an ice pack by wrapping ice cubes in a plastic bag or towel. (Do not put ice directly next to skin as it may 'ice-burn')
- **C**ompression involves the application of a firm elastic bandage around your ankle. It should be firm but not too tight that it stops blood flow or causes pain
- **E**levation involves lying with your ankle resting comfortably on a chair or pillows, so that its position is above the level of your heart
- **D**iagnosis of your injury can improve the rate of recovery by providing you with specific advice on the management of your symptoms.

Treatment of a sprain 48- 72 hours after injury and beyond

- Movement should replace rest. For most sprains this will simply mean starting to use the injured joint more freely. Do not do anything that causes too much pain, but gently get the joint moving again to prevent it becoming stiff and weak and to restore your balance. Some discomfort initially may be experienced.
- Compression bandages. You may be advised to remove the bandage after 48 - 72 hours because the bandage may limit movement of the joint which should normally be moving more freely after this time
- Sometimes an exercise program under the supervision of a physiotherapist is helpful to restore normal movement balance and strength.

### Can you prevent it?

Always warm up before doing vigorous exercise. Use good supporting footwear for sport. Try to avoid occasional bouts of vigorous exercise, particularly where you need to change direction quickly. Instead, aim for a gradual and steady build-up to fitness particularly if you stop exercise for a prolonged period following an ankle sprain as your ankle will be weaker, stiffer and have poorer balance which needs to be restored.

On the following page are some specific exercises that may assist. If you have significant pain or instability that persists beyond 6 weeks despite appropriate exercise seek further assessment.

## Exercises:

- The following exercises have been provided as they may help your symptoms if done regularly.
- They are not appropriate for everyone and remember to commence these exercises at a manageable level.
- The recommended time, repetitions and frequency of each exercise are intended as a guide that you may need to modify.
- It is normal to experience some muscle fatigue and generalised muscle soreness when doing a new exercise but you should not experience severe pain or acute exacerbation of your symptoms whilst doing them and particularly not for a prolonged period of time after the exercises.
- If you are not managing consult your GP.



Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched straight behind you and the other leg bent in front of you. Take support from a wall or chair.

Lean your body forwards and down until you feel the stretching in the calf of the straight leg. Hold approx. 30 secs. - relax. Stretch the other leg.

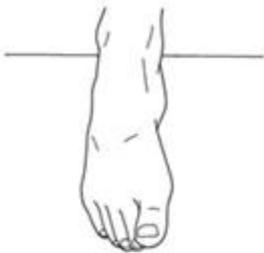
Repeat 3 times, 1 - 2 times per day.



Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched behind you. Hold on to a support.

Bend the leg to be stretched and let the weight of your body stretch your calf without lifting the heel off the floor. Hold approx. 30 secs. - relax.

Repeat 3 times, 1 - 2 times per day.



Sitting with your foot on the floor.

Alternately raise the inner border of your foot (big toe) and then the outer border (little toe).

Repeat 10 times, 3 sets, 2 - 3 times daily.

If this is too difficult lay on your back with your leg in the air, holding your thigh with your hands. Gently dip the outside and/or inside border of your foot toward you.



Stand on both feet on a step with both of your heels over the edge. Let your heels drop downwards as far as comfortable.

Push up on your toes.

Repeat 15 times, 3 sets.



Stand on an old pillow and balance. Ensure you are safe and will not fall and cause further injury.

Continue for 3 minutes.