



Syndesmotic Ankle Sprain

Definition: A syndesmotic ankle sprain is a tear of the ligaments above the ankle that stabilize the bones of the lower leg. This ligament supports the ankle when a person walks, runs, jumps and lands.

Common Terms: “High” ankle sprains.

Typical Mechanism of Injury: Syndesmotic ankle injuries usually occur when the lower leg rotates abnormally with the foot planted firmly into the ground.

Common Signs and Symptoms: A syndesmotic ankle sprain is similar to other ankle sprains. It will present with swelling, pain, limited movement, and even discoloration. Weight bearing will be painful, and many will not be able to actually walk normally, requiring the assistance of crutches.



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Common Treatment: All ankle sprains are initially treated with some form of protection, like a brace for immobilization to avoid further injury. Ice and elevation, as well as compression (such as with an ace wrap), can assist in reducing the swelling and pain associated with the injury. X-rays are often taken to make sure there are no fractures, although these are not always necessary. Your medical provider will assist in determining whether or not you need a brace and/or crutches, whether or not you are allowed to bear weight and whether or not you should receive formal and supervised rehabilitation. Within a few days, most individuals are able to begin exercises designed to increase the range of motion and strengthen the ankle joint.

Prevention: This type of injury is difficult to prevent, but wearing the proper athletic shoe, supportive brace, taping, and strengthening may assist in the prevention of a syndesmotic ankle sprain.

Expectations: Most ankle braces and ankle taping procedures are limited in their role in stabilizing rotation of the ankle. Therefore, these ligament injuries (high ankle sprains) tend to take longer to recover from when compared to most other general ankle sprains. One should expect possibly weeks to months for a full recovery. Performing a routine of exercises after the original injury may significantly reduce the risk of a re-injury.

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