



## **Ankle Sprain**

**Definition:** An ankle sprain is the stretching, tearing, or rupture of any of the ligaments that support the ankle. A ligament is a strong band of tissue that connects 2 bones to support and stabilize a joint.

**Common Terms:** The most common term used to describe this injury is an ankle sprain. Ligament tears, stretches, or instabilities all relate to general ankle sprains.



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**Typical Mechanism of Injury:** Most ankle ligament injuries occur when a person ‘rolls’ their foot, such as when stepping on someone else’s foot or a ball. This can occur with running, stepping up or down from uneven surface, or landing from a jump. The ankle can twist inward or outward, although most ankle sprains occur when the ankle is twisted inward. An inward twisting is likely to tear the ligaments on the outside of the ankle.

**Common Signs and Symptoms:** Ankle sprains are usually associated with pain and swelling and sometimes bruising in the side of the ankle and even into the foot or toes. Sometimes a pop or snap is heard with an ankle sprain. Ankle sprains are usually graded according to the amount of tissue damage. These grades are I, II, and III. Mild, or grade I, sprains, will involve pain, minimal swelling, and some decreased movement ability. The more severe the sprain (grades II & III), the more likely there will be greater amounts of pain, swelling, and movement limitations. Putting weight on the injured ankle will also be difficult with more severe sprains, and may give the feeling of instability.

**Common Treatment:** Immediate treatment should include applying ice to the injured area, with accompanied compression (like an ace wrap) and elevation. The sooner you are able to help control the pain and swelling from the ligament injury, the quicker the rate of recovery and return to function may be. X-rays may be taken to make sure there are no fractures, although these are not always necessary. Activity will be limited as a result of the severity of the injury and the goals of the individual. Crutches, braces and even casting may be required to provide support. The amount of weight bearing is usually determined by how much discomfort there is.

**Prevention:** Wearing the proper athletic shoe, supportive brace, taping, stretching, and strength training of the muscles surrounding the ankle joint may assist a person in having a more stable ankle. Following an ankle injury, exercises that promote strength training and balance awareness will significantly reduce one’s likelihood of having a reoccurring ankle sprain.

**Expectations:** Ankle sprain recovery varies tremendously from person to person depending on the severity of the ligament damage, the goals of return to activity, and the compliance of the person during rehabilitation. These injuries can take anywhere from several days to several weeks to heal.

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