

ANKLE SPRAIN

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is an injury that causes a stretch or tear of one or more ligaments in the ankle joint. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect bones at the joint.

Sprains may be graded I, II, or III depending on their severity:

- grade I sprain: pain with minimal damage to the ligaments
- grade II sprain: more ligament damage and mild looseness of the joint
- grade III sprain: complete tearing of the ligament and the joint is very loose or unstable

Sometimes sprains are just classified as mild or severe, depending on the amount of ligament damage.

There are many ligaments in the ankle. The most common type of sprain involves the ligaments on the outside part of the ankle (lateral ankle sprain). Ligaments on the inside of the ankle may also be injured (medial ankle sprain) as well as ligaments that are high and in the middle of the ankle (high ankle sprains).

How does it occur?

A sprain is caused by twisting your ankle. Your foot usually turns in or under but may turn to the outside.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of a sprained ankle include:

- mild aching to sudden pain
- swelling
- discoloration
- inability to move the ankle properly
- pain in the ankle even when you are not putting any weight on it

How is it diagnosed?

To diagnose a sprained ankle, the healthcare provider will review how the injury occurred and consider your symptoms. He or she will examine your ankle carefully. X-rays may be taken of your ankle.

How is it treated?

Treatment may include the following:

- Applying ice packs to your ankle for 20 to 30 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 to 3 days or until the pain goes away. Thereafter, ice your ankle

at least once a day until the other symptoms are gone.

- Elevating your ankle by placing a pillow underneath your foot. Try to keep your ankle above the level of your heart.
- Wrapping an elastic bandage around your ankle to keep the swelling from getting worse.
- Wearing a lace-up brace or ankle stirrup (an Aircast or Gel cast).
- Using crutches until you can walk without pain.
- Taking anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen, or other pain medication prescribed by your provider (adults aged 65 years and older should not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medicine for more than 7 days without their health-care provider's approval)
- Doing ankle exercises to improve your ankle strength and range of motion. The exercises will help you return to your normal activity or sports.

Rarely, severe ankle sprains with complete tearing of the ligaments need surgery. After surgery your ankle will be in a cast for 4 to 8 weeks.

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