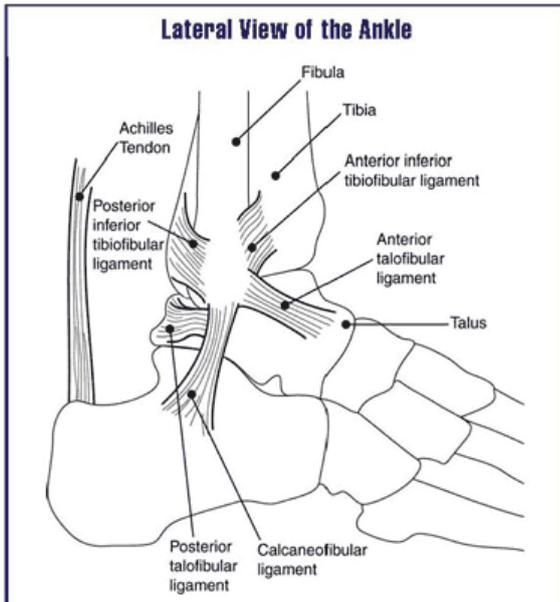


Ankle Sprain

Understanding ankle sprains

Ankle sprains are common but debilitating. What you do in the next few days will significantly improve the outcome for your ankle.



Most ankle sprains happen when a person twists or rolls over on their foot. This can cause over-stretching or tearing of one or more of the ligaments in the foot/ankle area. These ligaments are the strong bands of tissue that connect bone to bone and keep the joints stable.

There are three grades of ankle sprain ranging from mild to severe. Grade I is mild stretching of the ligament/s that doesn't affect the stability of the joint; grade II is a partial rupture of the ligament/s and grade III involves complete rupture of the ligament/s. Damage to these ligaments can lead to the ankle feeling unstable and a sensation of it 'giving way'.

Treatment for most ankle sprains is the same. Significant injuries may require an ankle brace or, rarely, a cast or boot.

The first 48 hours

- **Rest** – from weight bearing but start trying to move your ankle straight away. Use crutches to take weight off your ankle if you are having trouble walking.
- **Ice** – apply to the injured area for 15 minutes every 2 hours. Use a damp cloth layer, such as a towel, between the ice and your skin. Commercially available ice packs work best as they mould to your skin.
- **Compression** – using a compression bandage/stocking during the day may help with discomfort.
- **Elevation** – raise your ankle above the level of your heart to minimise swelling. The best position is lying down with your foot on some pillows. Hanging the ankle will do the most harm.
- **Avoid 'HARM'** – Heat, Alcohol, Running/sport and Massage.

Know the facts

1. Trying to walk normally and not limping helps your recovery, even while using crutches.
2. Your ankle needs to be elevated above heart height to effectively reduce swelling and this should continue after the initial 48 hours.
3. Using your ankle while it is supported (e.g. strapped) speeds your rate of recovery and return to normal activities.
4. Balance and co-ordination exercises are important as they help you recover faster and prevent further injuries.

