

ANKLE SPRAINS

Ankle sprains account for **50%** of all sport-related injuries and they are the **top reason** for missed participation in athletics, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. An ankle sprain is an injury to the ligaments that help stabilize the joints in the ankle. The injury occurs when a person rolls, twists, or turns their ankle in an awkward way and the ankle ligaments stretch beyond their natural limits and tear. The most common ankle sprain is an ankle inversion sprain which happens when the foot rolls inward causing injury to the lateral (*outside*) ankle ligaments. It is important to treat a sprained ankle properly to avoid the risk of chronic ankle pain and arthritis.



What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of ankle sprains: pain in the ankle (*especially with weightbearing*), swelling, bruising, tenderness, decreased ankle range of motion, and having an unstable feeling

Diagnosis and Treatment

Consulting with your physician after an ankle injury is recommended so that a physician can properly diagnose and recommend a treatment plan. Diagnosis can be made by subjective history, physical exam and sometimes imaging. The physician may grade the ankle sprain as I, II, or III depending on the level of severity. In the initial 48 to 72 hours following the ankle injury, RICE (*rest, ice, compression and elevation*) is recommended. Using crutches to help with walking for a few days after the injury may also be necessary and in some cases, a physician may recommend a period of immobilization in a boot to allow for a severe ankle sprain to heal. Physical therapy is commonly recommended after an ankle sprain to work on regaining full mobility, functional strength and motor control/balance so that it is possible to return to a prior level of function in the safest, most efficient way.

What are the risk factors?

Risk factors: walking or running on uneven surfaces, joint hypermobility (*loose joints*), poor mechanics with running/changing directions/landings from jumps, muscle weakness/imbalance, participation in sports, and prior ankle injury

Prevention

You can help prevent ankle sprains by warming up properly before participating in sports, by using caution when exercising on an uneven surface, and by performing an injury prevention program that includes exercises focusing on functional strength, motor control/balance, and plyometrics.