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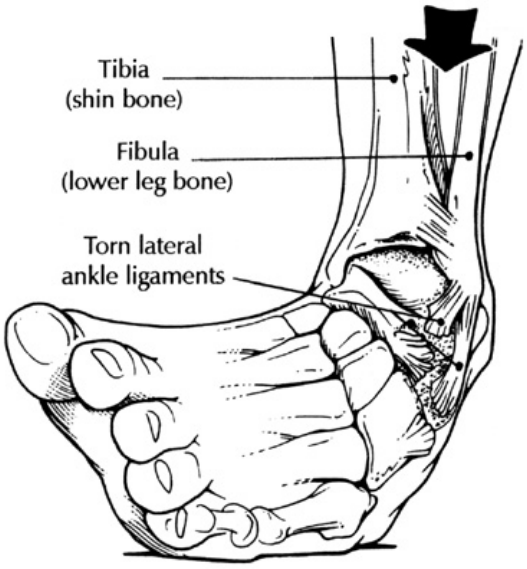


**Ankle Sprain and Instability**

Ankle Sprains are a very common injury that can happen to anyone. Our ankles support our entire body weight and are vulnerable to instability. Walking or running on an uneven surface or wearing the wrong shoes can cause a sudden loss of balance that makes the ankle twist. If the ankle turns far enough, the ligaments that hold the bones together can overstretch or tear, resulting in a sprain. A major sprain or several minor sprains can lead to permanent ankle instability
The bones in our leg and foot meet to form our ankle joint. The leg contains a large bone, called the Tibia and a small bone called the Fibula. These bones rest on the Talus bone in the foot. The Calcaneus bone, our heel, supports the Talus bone. Our heels bear 85% to 100% of our total body weight.

Strong tissues, called ligaments, connect our leg and foot bones together. On the outside of the ankle is a group of 3 ligaments, known together as the Lateral Collateral Ligament (LCL). The Anterior Talofibular Ligament is the weakest and most commonly injured or torn of this group, followed by the Calcaneofibular Ligament. The Posterior Talofibular Ligament is the strongest and is rarely injured.

Our ankles are susceptible to instability, especially when walking on uneven surfaces, stepping down at an angle, playing sports, or when wearing certain shoes, such as high heels. Everyone, even the fittest athlete, is vulnerable to a sudden loss of balance under these conditions. Our ankles support our entire body weight. When the foot is placed at an abnormal angle, the weight of our body places an abnormal amount of force on the ligaments causing them to stretch. When a ligament is forced to stretch beyond its limit, it may overstretch, tear, or disconnect from the bone.
You may lose your balance and fall if your foot is placed at a poor angle on the ground. Some individuals may hear a “pop” noise when the injury takes place. You will probably have difficulty putting weight on your foot or walking. Pain is usually the first symptom of a Sprained Ankle. Swelling, stiffness, and skin discoloration from bruising may occur right away or take a few hours to develop.
Diagnoses is made by a physical examination and often an X-ray is done to rule out a fracture. In severe cases, a Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) scan may be ordered to view the ankle structures in more detail.

Ankle Sprains are categorized by the amount of injury to the ligaments.

- Grade 1 sprain has minimal damage to the ligament, with slight stretching and some damage to the fibers.
- Grade 2 sprain is characterized by partial tearing of the ligament. The ankle joint is lax or looser than normal.
- Grade 3 sprain describes a complete tear of the ligament. The ankle joint is completely unstable

**Treatment**

The majority of Ankle Sprains heal without surgery. It is imperative that you seek evaluation and treatment for any ankle injury, as sometimes fractures are mistaken for sprains.

The treatment of an Ankle Sprain depends on its Grade. For all sprains, treatment begins with the RICE method for the first 48 hours. You should initially rest your ankle, which may include using crutches to help you walk. Apply ice for 15minutes intermittently for the first 48 hours. Compression bandages, such as elastic wraps, are helpful to immobilize and support the ankle. You should also elevate your ankle at a level above your heart for 48 hours to help reduce swelling. Grade 2 sprains may require an ankle air cast or soft splint for positioning and stability. And Grade 3 may need a short leg cast or a cast-brace system.

Physical Therapy utilizes modalities initially to promote decrease in pain and inflammation. Gentle exercises are prescribed to help move and stretch the foot which is helpful to improve circulation, reduce swelling, and improve range of motion. As you progress in physical therapy, you will participate in exercises to strengthen your muscles, followed by more advanced exercise in coordination, balance, endurance, and strength. Physical Therapy will focus on rehabilitating to safely return you to your previous level of activity and include exercises to prevent spraining your ankle again.

*Recovery*

Depending on the grade of the injury and what surgical or non-surgical methods are applied to repair the ankle, will determine the rate of recovery.

Grade 1 sprains should only experience slight limits to range of motion, and the recovery process is approximately six weeks.

Grade 2 sprains experience moderate impairment and recovery may take a few months.

Grade 3 sprains have severe impairment and may take several months to fully recover. Even after a full recovery, some patients find that swelling still might occur. In most cases, rehabilitation will help restore strength, mobility, and range of motion.

Recovery from surgery differs and depends on the extent of your injury and the type of surgery that was performed. Rehabilitation following surgery takes about two to three months. Physical therapy helps to strengthen the ankle muscles and increase movement. Success rates are high for both surgical procedures. The majority of individuals achieve an excellent recovery in about six months.

The information on this page is provided to you from Performance Physical Therapy. It is not intended to replace any information/treatment provided to you by your health care provider. Please feel free to check with your Physical Therapist if you have any questions about the information provided on this page.
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