

Ankle Sprain

What is the treatment?

For a mild sprain, self-help measures are usually enough. However, a severe sprain needs an X-ray, since there may be a fracture or a complete tear. Sometimes the pain of a sprain settles quickly, but if it lasts beyond 3-4 days a visit to your doctor is a good idea. Your doctor may apply a special strapping.

Self-help

This includes the following 'RICE' formula:

- Rest-** Rest as much as possible. If the sprain is severe, use crutches to take the weight off the ankle.
- Ice-** Apply icepack or soak the ankle in cold water to reduce the swelling. Use a special reusable compress (e.g. ACE wrap), or use a medium to a large bag of frozen peas, beans, or ice cubes in a plastic bag, and the first 48 hours is always important.
- Compression-** Compress and support the ankle with a firm (not tight) elastic bandage.
- Elevation-** Elevate the leg on a stool or chair until the swelling goes away.

Exercise program

Starting an exercise program with physical therapy can help prevent permanent stiffness. If not, here are some tips you can do on your own.

1. Firmly move your foot up and down at the ankle joint.
2. Rotate your foot inwards and outwards, keeping the foot at right angles to the leg.
3. Combine these exercises so that your foot moves slowly in a circle (clockwise, then counterclockwise.)
4. Ankle alphabet-trace the letters of the alphabet with your foot.

Pain-killers

Take pain medicines for pain, especially at night.

Walking

Walking in comfortable walking shoes is recommended for short distances. Walk as normally as possible, but avoid standing still for long periods.

Walking without shoes in sand is an excellent way of strengthening your ankle quickly (after the first 2-3 days).

What is the outcome?

For most sprains you can expect full recovery in 1-6 weeks. Severe sprains may take longer to heal, as a plaster cast for 4-6 weeks or surgery may be necessary.

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Patient Education Codes:
INJ-TX, INJ-EX, and INJ-PM