

What is an ankle sprain?

The injury that occurs when your foot "rolls," or turns on itself, is called an ankle sprain. In this injury, the ligaments that hold the ankle and foot bones in place are stretched and weakened. Ankle sprains often recur if not rehabilitated appropriately before returning to physical activity.

What should I do after an ankle sprain?

We recommend **RICE** treatment after a sprain:

- **R = Rest.** Stay off the injured ankle to help it heal. This also helps prevent further injury. Your doctor might have you use crutches if walking is too painful. Stay off your feet most of the time until you can walk without pain.
- **I = Ice.** Ice helps keep the swelling down and reduces pain. Put an ice pack on the ankle for 15 minutes every hour while you are awake for the first two or three days.
- **C = Compression.** Use an elastic bandage (Ace Wrap) to help decrease swelling and support your ankle for the first two or three days.
- **E = Elevation.** Keeping your foot raised above the level of your heart helps decrease pain and swelling..

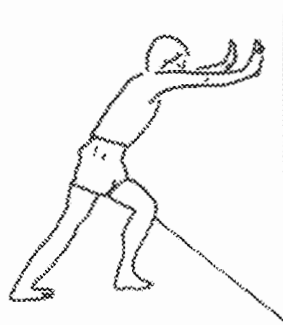
What can I take for pain?

Most ankle sprains require only mild pain relievers such as acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol), ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) or naproxen (Aleve). Occasionally prescription medicines are required.

What's next?

First it is important to regain your normal range of motion. Try using your big toe to write an imaginary alphabet in the air. Do this exercise several times each day. As the swelling goes down and you improve, make each letter as big as possible.

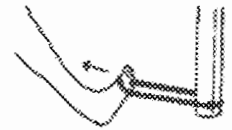
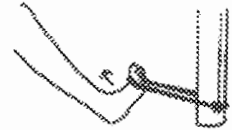
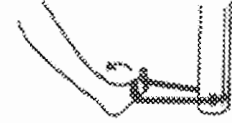
Stretch your Achilles tendon by standing about 18 inches from a wall. Hold your heel against the floor as you straighten your knee and lean against the wall.



What can I do to strengthen my ankle?

Sit on a firm chair, or stand up. Loop one end of the tubing around the leg of a sturdy table. Loop the other end of the tubing around the foot with the injured ankle.

- Stretch the tubing by moving your foot out to the side, away from the leg of the table.
- Stretch the tubing by moving your foot in to the middle, toward your good ankle.
- Stretch the tubing by pulling up with your foot (lifting up your foot), using your ankle, as if you were trying to pull the table toward you.
- Next, hold the other end of the tubing in your hand. Put your heel on the floor. Stretch the tubing by pushing down with your foot, the way you push on the gas pedal of a car.



After you have regained most of the strength in your ankle, you should attempt to stand on the injured leg, and then raise yourself on your toes, holding yourself in that position for 5 seconds. As you get stronger, practice doing it with your eyes closed to train your sense of balance.



What can I do to help prevent another ankle sprain?

- Wear flat shoes instead of high heels.
- When taking part in a sporting activity, wear a sturdy ankle brace (Swede-O is a good brand, about \$25) or a simple lace-up ankle brace (about \$15) for added protection. These are available at sporting goods stores.
- Don't stop doing the ankle exercises after your ankle feels better. Keep doing the exercises several times a week to keep your ankles strong.