

## Ankle Sprains

A sprained ankle is a very common injury. It can happen when you twist or turn your foot beyond its normal movement (people often say they have 'gone over' on their ankle). This can stretch or tear the ligaments that support your joint.



### Types:

Your physiotherapist or doctor may use a set of rules to 'grade' your sprained ankle. The most common ligament to undergo sprain is the lateral collateral ligament (inversion sprain).

- Grade 1 sprain is a mild sprain, which happens when you overstretch a ligament.
- Grade 2 sprain is a moderate sprain. This happens when you overstretch and partially tear a ligament.
- Grade 3 sprain is a severe sprain, which happens when you completely tear a ligament. The swelling, bruising and pain around your ankle are usually very bad.

### Symptoms:

Your symptoms will depend on how bad your injury is. They may include:

- pain
- swelling
- bruising
- restricted movement
- difficulty putting weight on your foot
- instability of your ankle (your ankle feels wobbly when you try to stand on it)
- a popping or tearing sound at the time of your injury

### Diagnosis:

Your physiotherapist/doctor will usually be able to diagnose a sprained ankle by listening to what you tell them and by examining you. You be referred for a suitable investigation if deemed necessary.

### Treatment:

If you have a sprained ankle, there's a lot you can do to ease your symptoms in the first few days. If you see a doctor, nurse or physiotherapist, they'll probably advise you to follow the steps below.

### P.O.L.I.C.E principle:

**P**-Protect your injury from further damage, depending on the injury consider some form of support or splint.

**OL** -Optimal loading with gradual weight bearing and build up the range of movement guided by what feels right for you.

**I**-Ice pack wrapped in to a towel on the painful area. Do for about 20min every 2-3 hours for 2 to 3 days.

**C**-Compression of the injured area using a bandage to help reduce swelling.

**E**-Elevate your injury above the level of heart using cushion or chair.

For the first few days after an injury, prevent further damage by avoiding **H.A.R.M**

**H**-Heat, Do not have hot baths, showers or sauna and avoid using any heat rubs

**A**-Alcohol, Avoid alcohol as it can slow down recovery and increases chances of hurting again

**R**-Running, Don't run or do any moderate activities as it may cause further damage **M**-Massage, Massaging in the injured area can cause more swelling and bruising

If you have a bad sprain, your doctor may advise you to immobilise it. This means keeping your ankle still, and will probably only be for a few days.

Physiotherapy aims to keep your ankle moving, prevents stiffness and strengthens the muscles and joints around your ankle. Your physiotherapist may ask you to focus on building your strength and mobility through co-ordination exercises and balance training. It's important to stick to the exercise plan your physiotherapist recommends. The right time to start exercising your ankle usually depends on how bad it is. Your doctor or physiotherapist may refer you for an orthopaedic review if deemed necessary.

### Exercise considerations:

- Do all the exercises within pain free limits, stretch pain is common with exercises and that should ease off within 30 minutes-1 hour after having done the exercises
- Post exercise soreness is quite common and could be felt up to 48 hours after having done the exercise regime. This should get better as you continue with the regime over time
- If any exercise worsens your symptoms, stop that exercise and seek advice from your physiotherapist.