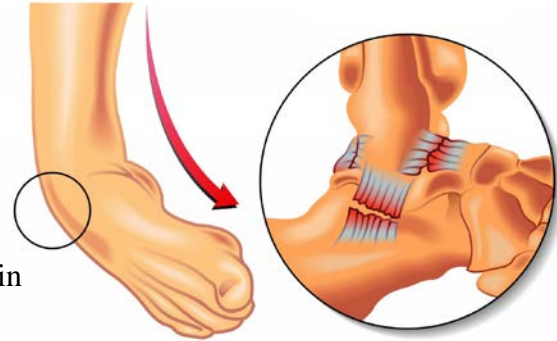


Ankle Sprain

An ankle sprain refers to tearing of the ligaments of the ankle. The most common ankle sprain occurs on the outside of the ankle. This is an extremely common injury which affects many people during a wide variety of activities.

What are the symptoms an ankle sprain?

Patients report pain after having twisted an ankle. This usually occurs due to an inversion injury, which means the foot rolls underneath the ankle or leg. It commonly occurs during sports. Patients will complain of pain on the outside of their ankle and various degrees of swelling and bruising. Depending on the severity of the sprain, a person may or may not be able to put weight on the foot.



What are the risk factors for an ankle sprain?

Risk factors are activities, such as basketball and jumping sports, in which a person can come down on and turn the ankle.

Some people are predisposed to ankle sprains. In people with a high arched foot, these injuries are more common. This is because it is easier to turn on the ankle.

In those who have had a sprain in the past, it is easier to turn the ankle and cause a new sprain. Those who have weak muscles, especially those called the peroneals which run along the outside of the ankle, may be more predisposed.

What are treatment options?

Conservative Treatment

Even in severe sprains, ligaments usually heal without surgery. Severity of the sprain will dictate treatment. The patient's ability to bear weight is important. Those that can bear weight even after the injury are likely to return very quickly to play. Those who cannot walk may need to be immobilized.

Treatment in the first 48 to 72 hours consists of resting the ankle, icing 20 minutes every two to three hours, compressing with an ACE wrap, and elevating. Patients who cannot bear weight are better treated in a removable walking boot until they can comfortably bear weight.

Physical therapy is a mainstay. Patients should strengthen the muscles around the ankle. An ankle brace can be used in an athlete until a therapist believes that the ankle is strong enough to return to play without it.

Surgical Treatment

Surgery is rarely indicated but may be needed in a patient who has cartilage damage or other related injuries. Ligaments are only repaired or strengthened in cases of chronic instability when patients have multiple sprains.

How long is recovery?

Recovery depends on the severity of the injury. For minor injuries, people can return to their activities in sports within several days. For very severe sprains, it may take longer and up to several weeks. It should be noted that high ankle sprains take considerably longer to heal.

Potential Complications

Surgery is rarely needed. As noted above, however, an improperly rehabbed ankle may end up having chronic instability. It is important to address this with either therapy or surgery before further damage occurs to the ankle.