

ankle sprains

what is an ankle sprain?

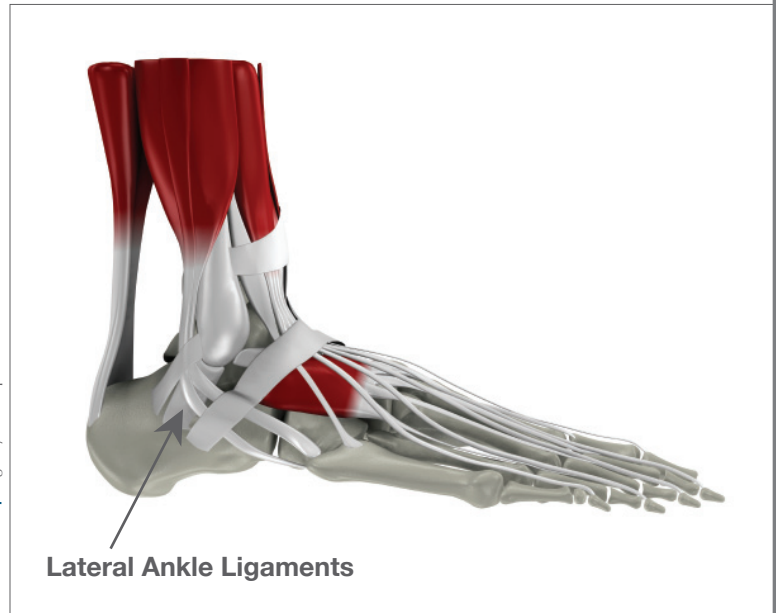
An ankle sprain is the overstretching of the ligaments (structures that connect bone to bone) during a traumatic fall or twisting of the ankle. There are varying types of ankle sprains dependent on location and severity. Lateral (outside of the ankle) sprains are most common.

who is at risk?

- Children/adolescents who participate in running and jumping activities (i.e. football, soccer, gymnastics, dance, baseball, track, volleyball, basketball, hockey, etc.).
- Children/adolescents who have had a traumatic fall or twisting of the ankle.
- Children/adolescents who have learned improper training techniques and/or use improper shoes or equipment.

what are the symptoms?

- Grade I: minor stretching of a ligament with minimal swelling/edema and minimal restriction to the range of motion.
- Grade II: combination of complete and/or partial ligament tears with instability at the joint restricting movement, moderate localized swelling, tenderness, bruising and limited weight bearing tolerance on the foot.
- Grade III: a complete rupture of a ligament(s) and capsule around a joint with significant swelling, bruising and inability to bear any weight on the foot.



Outside View of Ankle

what are the treatment options?

Conservative/non-surgical treatment:

- Rest from aggravating activities or “relative” rest.
- Ice the area after activity and when painful for 10 to 20 minutes up to once a hour. Elevation and compression of the ankle will assist with decreasing swelling and edema.
- Muscle stretching to improve flexibility.
 - Stretching should be done both before and after activity.
 - Concentrate on the gastrocnemius/soleus (calf) stretching and active movement of ankle in all directions.
 - If the condition does not improve, a referral to physical therapy to address pain, swelling, range of motion, flexibility, strength, gait, bracing and a return to sport training program will usually improve symptoms.
- Ankle sleeves or a brace might assist with supporting the ankle joint.

Surgical treatment:

- Rarely needed for lateral ankle instability.
- Occasionally surgery is needed for scar tissue or cartilage injury within the joint.

what is the time frame for returning to activity/sport?

- Grade I patients are often able to return after seven to 10 days of conservative treatment.
- Grade II patients are often able to return after two to four weeks of conservative treatment.
- Grade III patients often return to sport, but miss the immediate sport season.

what are the long-term side effects?

Return to preinjury activities is expected for more than 99 percent of individuals.

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