



Ankle Sprain

Most people have twisted an ankle at some point in their life. But if your ankle gets swollen and painful after you twist it, you have most likely sprained it. This means you have stretched and possibly torn the ligaments in your ankle. Even though ankle sprains are common, they are not always minor injuries. Some people with repeated or severe sprains can develop long-term joint pain and weakness. Treating a sprained ankle can help prevent ongoing ankle problems.

Most ankle sprains happen when you make a rapid shifting movement with your foot planted; such as when you play soccer or get tackled in football. Often the ankle rolls outward and the foot turns inward. This causes the ligaments on the outside of the ankle to stretch and tear. Less often, the ankle rolls inward and the foot turns outward. This damages the ligaments on the inside of the ankle. Ankle sprains can range from mild to severe, depending on how badly the ligament is damaged and how many ligaments are injured. With a mild sprain, the ankle may be tender, swollen, and stiff. But it usually feels stable, and you can walk with little pain. A more serious sprain might include bruising and tenderness around the ankle, and walking is painful. In a severe ankle sprain, the ankle is unstable and may feel "wobbly." You can't walk, because the ankle gives out and may be very painful.

With most sprains, you feel pain right away at the site of the tear. Often the ankle starts to swell immediately and may bruise. The ankle area is usually tender to touch, and it hurts to move it. In more severe sprains, you may hear and/or feel something tear, along with a pop or snap. You will probably have extreme pain at first and will not be able to walk or even put weight on your foot. Usually, the more pain and swelling you have, the more severe your ankle sprain is and the longer it will take to heal.

Your doctor will ask you how the injury occurred and if you have hurt your ankle before. He or she will check your foot and ankle, your lower leg, and even your knee to see if you are hurt anywhere else. If the sprain is mild, your doctor may not order X-rays. But with more severe sprains, you may need X-rays to rule out a broken bone in the ankle or the foot. It is possible to break a bone in your foot or ankle at the same time as a sprain. Spraining an ankle can increase your risk of re-injury as much as 40-70%. Proper post-injury care, rehabilitation exercises and bracing can decrease this risk. Refer to [ankle exercise](#) information that may help you prevent re-injury.

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