

Ankle Sprains

Ankle sprains, particularly ligament sprains are one of the most commonly treated injuries and are extremely common in sports that involve rapid changes in direction such as netball, football and soccer. An ankle sprain can result in a swollen and bruised ankle after an incident during sport, work or everyday activities. It may be a first time sprain or it could be a recurrent injury.

The ankle joint consists of four bones which are connected via several ligaments and muscles – these help prevent excessive motion. When the ankle twists, the ligaments usually prevent the joint from moving too much. An ankle sprain occurs when one of the supporting ligaments is stretched too far too quickly, causing tearing.



How Can Therapy Help?

Research shows that early mobilization and functional rehabilitation of ankle sprains result in better outcome than if the injured ankle is immobilized or not rehabilitated at all. Physiotherapy management leads to fewer residual symptoms, improved range of motion and running speed, earlier return to sport with greater comfort.

Treatment of an ankle sprain depends upon the severity of the injury. In the first 36 - 48 hours after an ankle sprain, follow the R.I.C.E.D. principle (click here for more information on R.I.C.E.D.). Physiotherapy management of an acute ankle sprain involves the reduction of pain and swelling, restoration of ankle motion, muscle conditioning, and exercises to allow a successful and timely return to sport, work or everyday activities. The early management plan involves an ice bath regime with specific exercises adapted to the exact diagnosis of your injury which is why a thorough assessment after what appears to be a simple ankle sprain is vital.



Taping or bracing may be used on the ankle joint to help prevent injury – a good solid brace, or the taping technique described should be used.

Early treatment is the key to a good outcome in this condition. Seeing a Therapist as soon after the injury as possible will avoid prolonging symptoms and impairment and will reduce the chances of a drawn out rehabilitation process. Rehabilitation can begin immediately. All patients can benefit from physical therapy, not just those who are

failing to progress through the natural recovery process.

When an ankle is sprained the muscles are often strained as well as ligaments. Limping on the sore ankle can lead to further muscle imbalances and tightness. An effective treatment for the muscular component associated with ankle sprains is Trigger Point Dry Needling (TDN). TDN involves the use of a fine filament needle (acupuncture needle) to deactivate tight and tender trigger points within a muscle. Deactivating the trigger point improves muscle function and aids recovery.

For a list of practitioners trained in TDN 'click here'.

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