

Boulder Office

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Ankle Sprain

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is an injury that causes a stretch or tear of one or more ligaments in the ankle joint. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that connect bones at the joint to stabilize the joint.

There are many ligaments in the ankle. The most common type of sprain involves the ligaments on the outside part of the ankle (lateral ankle sprain). Ligaments on the inside of the ankle may also be injured (medial ankle sprain) as well as ligaments that are between the bones of the lower leg (high ankle sprains).



How does it occur?

A sprain is caused by twisting your ankle. Your foot usually turns in or under but may turn to the outside.

How it is treated?

Treatment may include:

- Applying ice packs to your ankle for 15 minutes every 3 to 4 hours for the first 2 to 3 days or until the swelling has subsided. Thereafter, ice your ankle at least once a day until the other symptoms are gone.
- Elevating your ankle by placing a pillow underneath your foot. Try to keep your ankle above the level of your heart.
- Wrapping an elastic bandage around your ankle to keep the swelling from getting worse.
- Wearing a lace-up brace or ankle stirrup.
- Using crutches until you can walk without pain.
- Taking anti-inflammatory medication, such as ibuprofen, or other pain medication prescribed by your provider
- Doing ankle exercises to improve your ankle range of motion and strength. The exercises will help you return to your normal activity or sports.

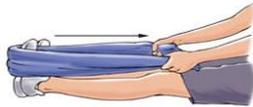
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Ankle Sprain Rehabilitation Exercises



Towel stretch

Towel stretch: Sit on a hard surface with one leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around your toes and the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 15 to 30 seconds then relax. Repeat 3 times.

Standing calf stretch: With your shoes on, face a wall, and put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Keep one leg back with the heel on the floor, and the other leg forward. Turn your back foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeon-toed) and keep your knee straight as you slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times and then switch the position of your legs and repeat the exercise 3 times. Repeat this exercise with your back knee bent.



Standing calf stretch

Ankle range of motion: Sitting or lying down with your legs straight and your knee toward the ceiling, draw the alphabet with your toes.

As the pain and swelling improve, start to add strengthening exercises.

Resisted ankle dorsiflexion: Sit with one leg out straight and your foot facing a doorway. Tie a loop in one end of elastic tubing. Put your foot through the loop so that the tubing goes around the top of your foot. Tie a knot in the other end of the tubing and shut the knot in the door. Move backward until there is tension in the tubing. Keeping your knee straight, pull your foot toward your body, stretching the tubing. Slowly return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10.



Resisted ankle dorsiflexion



Resisted ankle plantar flexion

Resisted ankle plantar flexion: Sit with your leg outstretched and loop the middle section of the tubing around the ball of your foot. Hold the ends of the tubing in both hands. Gently press the ball of your foot down and point your toes, stretching the tubing. Return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10.

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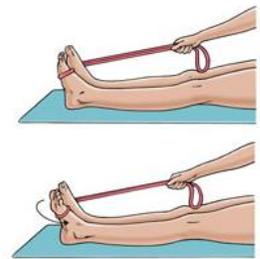
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Resisted ankle inversion

Resisted ankle inversion: Sit with your legs out straight and cross one leg over your other ankle. Wrap elastic tubing around the ball of your bottom foot and then loop it around your top foot so that the tubing is anchored there at one end. Hold the other end of the tubing in your hand. Turn your bottom foot inward and upward. This will stretch the tubing. Return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10

Resisted ankle eversion: Sit with both legs stretched out in front of you, with your feet about a shoulder's width apart. Tie a loop in one end of elastic tubing. Put one foot through the loop so that the tubing goes around the arch of that foot and wraps around the outside of the other foot. Hold onto the other end of the tubing with your hand to provide tension. Turn the foot with the tubing up and out. Make sure you keep your other foot still so that it will allow the tubing to stretch as you move your foot with the tubing. Return to the starting position. Do 3 sets of 10.



Resisted ankle eversion

Clams: Lie on your side with your hips and knees flexed. Keep your feet together and raise the upper knee without rotating our back or pelvis. Slowly lower. Repeat each side 10-15 times.



You may do the rest of the exercises when you can stand on your injured ankle without pain.



Heel raise

Heel raise: Balance yourself while standing behind a chair or counter. Using the chair to help you, raise your body up onto your toes and hold for 5 seconds. Then slowly lower yourself down without holding onto the chair. Hold onto the chair or counter if you need to. When this exercise becomes less painful, try lowering on one leg only. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

Balance training: Practice standing on one leg while doing daily activities such as brushing your teeth or doing the dishes. This will help your brain's awareness of where the foot/ankle are and re-learn how to make the small corrections in its position to help prevent future ankle sprains.