



PREVENTION. CARE. RECOVERY.

Te Kaporeihana Āwhina Hunga Whara

Knowing about your Ankle Sprain



Knowing about ankle sprain

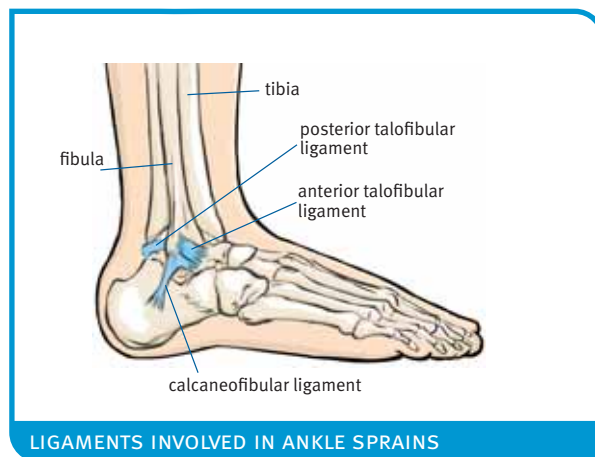
Ankle sprain is a common injury amongst sports such as netball, basketball, rugby and soccer. Sprains can also happen with everyday activities such as walking on uneven ground and going up and down stairs.

Most ankle sprains happen when a person twists or rolls over on their foot. This can cause over-stretching or tearing of one or more of the ligaments in the foot/ankle area. These ligaments are the strong bands of tissue that connect bone to bone and keep the joints stable.

There are three grades of ankle sprain ranging from mild to severe. Grade I is a mild stretching of the ligament/s that doesn't affect the stability of the joint; grade II is a partial rupture of the ligament/s and grade III involves complete rupture of the ligament/s. This can lead to the ankle feeling un-stable and a sensation of it 'giving way'.

Pain is the most common symptom. Other long-term problems may include instability, swelling on and off, and stiffness.

If you sprain your ankle again you risk adding new damage. Therefore it is very important to fully rehabilitate and strengthen your ankle after injury to help you get back to your usual activities.



IMPORTANT: information in this booklet is not intended to replace advice from a health professional

Important facts

- Trying to walk normally and not limping helps your recovery.
- Your ankle needs to be elevated above hip level to reduce swelling effectively.
- Using your ankle while it is supported (e.g. strapped) speeds up your recovery and return to usual activities such as work and sport.
- Balance and co-ordination exercises are important in helping you recover and in preventing further injury.

Questions to ask your health professional

- What can be done about my ankle sprain?
- What can I do to help myself?
- How will this ankle sprain affect my day-to-day life?
- What can I do to help prevent this happening again?
- Do I need to be completely pain-free before returning to work?
- How do I find out about what I can do at work?

Tips to help your recovery

Initial phase – Week one

- See a health professional early; early advice and treatment means a quicker recovery.
- See a health professional to exclude any serious injuries such as fractures (broken bones).
- Ask about pain medication that's right for you.
- Get advice about what you can do at home. This may include elevating your leg to reduce swelling and ice for pain relief.
- Ask about functional treatment. This means using various types of support (eg strapping tape) to allow you to walk as normally as possible while still protecting the ankle joint.
- Discuss your treatment plan with your health professional.
- Tell them about the jobs and activities you do at home and work – they may need to be changed.

Rehabilitation phase – Weeks two-six

- Using your ankle early is the best treatment even with a severe ligament rupture.
- Functional treatment is appropriate for all grades of sprain and rupture. Ask about the different types of bracing available: eg strapping, elasticised ankle supports and lace-up semi-rigid braces.
- Find out about treatment options to help recovery. This could include joint mobilisation for range of movement, strengthening exercises, co-ordination and balance re-training.

- Depending on the type of job or activities you do, your health professional might suggest changed work duties or time off; eg if you stand all day at work or your job involves a lot of driving, these may need to be temporarily changed.
- Work with your health professional, employer and ACC to develop a safe and durable return to work plan.
- Discuss any worries or concerns with your health professional.

Ongoing rehabilitation to prevent another sprain – the 'fully-fit' ankle

- Functional instability or 'giving way' can be a problem therefore it is important to fully rehabilitate your ankle.
- Ask your health professional about the type of specific exercises you need to focus on. For ankles this should include balance, co-ordination, agility and specific skills you need for your usual activities such as work and/or sport
- See www.acc.co.nz/injury-prevention/safe-in-sport-and-recreation for more information about ankle sprains.

Things you can do

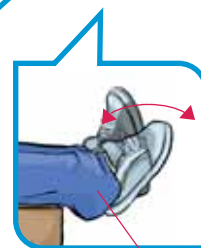
- Your ankle may become swollen by the end of the day. At home lie with your legs elevated and pump/flex your sore ankle.
- Keep working on your balance exercises – try standing on one leg and shutting your eyes – time yourself.
- Ensure your ankle is ‘fully-fit’ for the activities you want to do.
- If pain continues and does not improve after two weeks, return to your health professional and ask for further tests (eg x-ray, blood tests).

Exercises

Ask your health professional if these exercises are right for you and how often to do them



ANKLE PUMP:
With the legs elevated, gently extend and flex the injured ankle.



injured ankle



AGILITY – FIGURE OF 8 WALKING/RUNNING:
Start by walking in a large figure of 8 shape. Work towards making the shape smaller and increasing to running speed as your ankle allows. Do this in both directions.

BALANCE:
Balance on your injured leg. Start with your eyes open, then with your eyes closed. Keep trying to increase the length of time you can balance.



Staying active

Try to do all the things that you would normally do at home and work. You may need to take breaks during the day to elevate your ankle.

Most people with physically demanding lives can expect to return to their usual activities by 3 weeks depending on the severity of the injury.

The time it takes to return to normal activities increases with the physical demands of the job.

Most people in desk jobs can expect to return to their usual activities within a few days.



Everyone has a role to play...

... in supporting your return to activity including work (both paid and unpaid).

YOUR WORKPLACE SHOULD

- Be safe
- Provide support, help with a rehabilitation plan and suitable duties – restricted hours, alternative or changed tasks – to keep you at work
- Be in contact with ACC

YOUR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHOULD GIVE YOU

- Useful advice and treatment, or referral for treatment
- Support in developing a rehabilitation plan eg exercises
- Appropriate follow-up

I SHOULD

- Take control and stay positive
- Get in early and report my back pain to my employer
- Seek advice and treatment from a health professional
- Discuss a plan to stay at work with my employer, ACC and health professional

YOUR FAMILY CAN

- Give you support and encouragement to stay active and positive
- Be reassured adequate support and treatment is being given

ACC CAN

- Provide information, support and guidance
- Advise your workplace and health professional about ACC programmes that can help you in getting back to work early such as the:
 - Graduated Return to Work
 - Employment Maintenance Programme
 - Activity Based Programme

My important contacts

MY HEALTH PROFESSIONAL (EG. DOCTOR, PHYSIOTHERAPIST)

Name

Phone number

MY EMPLOYMENT CONTACT PERSON (EG. MANAGER)

Name

Phone number

MY ACC CONTACT PERSON (EG. CASE MANAGER)

Name

Phone number

ACC claim number

OTHER CONTACTS

Name

Phone number

Name

Phone number

For more information about ACC and our services call 0800 101 996 or visit www.acc.co.nz. We have interpreters who understand over 30 different languages.