



ANKLE SPRAIN: REHAB EXERCISES AND COMMON MYTHS

Signs and Symptoms

Likely to have landed awkwardly, twisting, or falling causing immediate pain/swelling, mainly on the outside of the foot and ankle joint below the bone.

Important

If you cannot take 3-4 steps with full weight bearing without sharp, intense pain you should have an X-ray to rule out any further damage.

Myth #1: Keep Ankle Immobile and Stay Off of It

Especially after an acute ankle sprain, one of the worst things you can do is to keep it stiff and immobile. This causes the ankle joint, ligaments, and muscles to tighten up and restrict pain-free motion. Instead, you need to move the ankle gently and gradually to improve range of motion and swelling.

Myth #2: The R.I.C.E Method Is Best for Ankle Sprains

As mentioned above, only keeping the ankle elevated and iced may make the foot feel better, but it will only stiffen up the joint more and hinder quicker recovery. Active range of motion and movement is better early on, since our muscles act as pumps to help flush the swelling out. You can continue to use ice for pain relief for the first 7-10 days as needed, but motion is KEY.

Myth #3: Sprains Are Minor Injuries with No Long-Term Problems

It's easy to think these injuries are harmless, especially since most have quick and predictable recoveries. However unfortunately, recurrent mild/moderate ankle sprains can lead to long term instability and increase the chances of it happening again. You may need a specialized rehab program to improve strength, balance, and stability. Make sure to see a specialist to have your ankle evaluated.

Early Rehab Exercises

1. 3D Ankle Excursions / Clocks

Stand on injured leg as shown in picture. Perform a toe tap forward, keeping stable and balanced. Come back to center and repeat in all 12 directions like clock faces. Repeat counterclockwise and perform 2 to 3 sets.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

2. Calf Stretch

Prop the injured foot onto a towel or wedge, then lunge forward, keeping your heel on the ground until you get a stretch in the back of the calf. Hold for 30-60 seconds and repeat 2 to 3 times.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

3. Single Leg Nose to Wall Touches

As shown in picture, stand about 6 to 12 in from wall. With injured leg planted firmly and balancing on the ground, reach your nose forward until you touch the wall and back.

Take your head and “reach” in different directions, and you should feel your calf and ankles muscles working hard. Perform 10 to 15 touches for 2 to 3 sets.

Watch Video: [See the Exercise Demonstration Here](#)

4. See a Physical Therapist / Movement Specialist!

As we mentioned before, if you have sprained your ankle and there is a significant amount of swelling and pain with movement see a Physical Therapist. A safe and gradual progression of return to sport exercises is crucial to a quick recovery and will reduce the chances of sprains in the future.

Schedule A Visit: [Request an Appointment Here](#)