

The primary goal of treatment is to prevent swelling immediately after injury. Ice is the mainstay of treatment in the first two to three days, along with a compression type bandage, such as an Ace wrap. If there is pain with walking on the ankle, it is best to keep off the leg with the use of crutches or other aides to prevent further injury. Depending on the severity of the injury, a splint or cast can be effective to prevent further injury and speed the healing process.

Actively moving the ankle up and down and making circles with the foot (inside and outside circles) can help reduce swelling and prevent stiffness. Depending on the severity of your injury, your physician can help you with an appropriate rehab program to get you back up to athletic participation.

Remember R-I-C-E

A good rule to follow for ankle sprains is RICE -- rest, ice, compression and elevation.

Rest is an essential part of the rehabilitation process. If necessary (talk with your doctor), eliminate all weight bearing activity from your schedule. If crutches are required, have them fitted by your doctor or therapist and ask your doctor about gait pattern. This may be a partial touchdown pattern or a total non-weightbearing pattern, depending on your injury and comfort level. Rest may include alternative, nonweightbearing training methods, such as swimming or stationary bicycle.

Ice - Partially fill a plastic bag with crushed ice and place over the injury. To protect sensitive skin, place the ice bag over a layer of elastic bandage that has been soaked in cold water. Alternately, apply ice bags directly to the skin. Leave the ice on for approximately 30 minutes.

Compression - Compress the injured area by wrapping it with a compression pad and elastic bandage (Ace). This will provide support and reduce swelling. The tension on the wrap should be firm and even, but not too tight.

Elevation - Along with the application of ice, elevate the injured area above the level of the heart. Continue this same procedure in the ensuing hours with the compression bandage in place.

Rehabilitation

The two goals of rehab are: (1) to decrease the swelling, and (2) to strengthen the muscles around the ankle. Swelling can be reduced by keeping the ankle elevated as much as possible and using compression appropriately. Follow these exercises to increase the ankle's strength.

Return to Sports

In order to return to sports, it is generally recommended that you have minimal or no swelling or pain, and can perform forward and side to side hops on the ankle without pain or a feeling of instability. For serious sprains, it is a good idea to tape or brace the ankle to decrease the likelihood of recurrent injury.

Your physician and trainer will guide you in your quest to return to sports or other activities.

Exercises

Range of Motion Alphabet Exercise.

Apply an ice pack to your ankle for 20 minutes. Then trace the alphabet with your big toe while hanging your foot over the edge of a couch or table. Do this three times a day. Discontinue the exercise when you have full ankle motion.



Endurance.

Start endurance exercises after you regain full ankle motion. Use a loop of elastic band 36" long (Theraband or a bicycle inner tube). Do 30 repetitions of each of the following exercises three times a day.



a. Plantar Flexion. Hold one end of the elastic band with your hands and loop the other end around the ball of your foot. While pulling on the band, push the ball of your foot away from your body. Hold for three counts. Repeat.



b. Dorsiflexion. Loop one end of the band around a secure

object, such as the leg of a table, and the other end around your forefoot. Pull your forefoot backward toward your trunk. Hold for three counts.



c. Inversion. With the band looped around a secure object, sit in a chair. Keeping your heel on the floor, swing your forefoot inward. Hold three counts.



d. Eversion. Starting from the same position as in the inversion exercise, but with the elastic band in the reverse direction, swing your forefoot outward. Hold for three counts.



Strengthening. When you can do the above endurance exercises easily and without discomfort, double the elastic band (make two loops) and do 10 reps of the same exercises three times a day. Alternately, do the exercises with a weight boot, or tape a weight plate or brick to the sole of a tennis shoe. Add toe raise exercises as follows: Place the balls of your feet on a step, rise and stand on your toes. Hold for three counts. First, point your feet straight ahead, then inward, and then outward. Graduate to standing on one foot at a time.



Balance.

Stork Leg Exercise. Raise your uninjured foot and stand only on the injured foot for 1 minute. Repeat for a total of 5 minutes, three times a day. Advance to standing on one leg with your eyes closed.

Functional Activities. When you can walk without pain or a

limp, proceed to straight-ahead jogging on a smooth surface, then to figure-eight running, and finally to zigzag running.

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