



## Ankle Sprain

Ligaments are bands of tissue that help to stabilize joints and prevent excessive movement. A sprain occurs when the ligaments are forced beyond their normal range of motion. This can happen when you roll, twist or turn your ankle during sports or regular daily activities. Since the symptoms of a sprain are very similar to those of a fracture, it is important to see a doctor to be properly examined. The doctor will check your range of motion and tenderness and will decide if additional imaging is necessary. The healing time for an ankle sprain is usually around 4 to 6 weeks.

### Signs of a sprained ankle include:

- Pain, especially when you bear weight
- Swelling
- Bruising
- Decreased range of motion

Although treatment of the sprained ankle depends on the severity of the sprain, it most often includes using the R.I.C.E. approach.

- **Rest** → Resting the affected joint helps to avoid additional injury to the tissues. This may include using crutches or just bearing weight as tolerated. This means no sports unless told otherwise by your doctor.
- **Ice** → Apply ice to the affected area for 20 minutes every 2-3 hours while awake during the first 24-72 hours after the injury. Cold reduces pain, swelling and inflammation in injured muscles, joints and tissues.
- **Compression** → To help reduce swelling, compress the ankle with an ace wrap. Don't wrap too tightly or you may decrease circulation. Begin wrapping at area farthest from your heart, and stop when you get above the injury. Loosen the ace bandage if pain increases, any numbness occurs or if swelling increases below the wrapped area.
- **Elevation** → Elevation is one of the most important parts of treatment. To reduce swelling, you need to elevate the extremity above the heart. This may involve reclining the child and is most easily done when the child is asleep overnight. Gravity helps to reduce swelling by draining excess fluid back towards the heart.

Your doctor may incorporate range of motion exercises to reduce stiffness or physical therapy to help restore your child's range of motion, flexibility, strength and balance. Balance and stability training are important to retrain the ankle muscles to work together to support the joint. Your doctor may also recommend using over-the-counter medications to help reduce pain and swelling.

If a sprained ankle is left untreated or your child returns to sports too soon, they may experience another sprain. Repeated ankle sprains can cause your child to have chronic pain, chronic joint instability and early onset arthritis. Because injuries and recovery times are different for every person, your doctor is the best person to determine when your child is ready to return to sports based on their examination. It is difficult to estimate an exact date when return to sports will be safe. Your doctor may also recommend using a brace to help support the joint for the first few months following an injury.