



Tips From the Training Room

For more information contact the athletic training staff at Towson Sports Medicine, 410-828-4TSM (4876).

Ankle Sprains

What is an ankle sprain?

A sprain is classified as a stretching or tearing of ligaments. Sprains are divided into 3 grades of severity. Grade I - slight/ minor stretching of ligament(s). Grade II partial tearing of ligament(s). Grade III - complete tear of ligament(s). The most commonly sprained ligament in the ankle is the Anterior Talofibular Ligament. Which is located on the lateral (outside) part of the ankle just anterior (forward) and inferior (below) the lateral malleolus (ankle bone).

Signs & Symptoms

- Swelling
- Pain
- Range of motion loss
- Inability to weight bear
- Point tenderness directly over the injured ligament(s)
- Loss of strength
- Bruising
- Increased ligament laxity

Initial Treatment

The best initial treatment for a suspected ankle sprain is the PRICE principle. PRICE stands for protection, rest, ice, compression, elevation.

Protection - the use of a splint, brace or crutches may give the injured ankle the support it needs immediately after injury. This also may help protect against any further injury.

Rest - a complete rest from any physical activity for at least 2-3 days or a qualified healthcare professional has evaluated the injury and gave other instructions.

Ice - using ice for 20-30 minutes, every hour or as much as possible is the best modality for initial treatment. It is important to remember that the use of heat is not recommended for at least 3 days and/or the swelling has decreased or gone away completely. Caution should be taken when using ice gel packs. There should always be a barrier (towel, pillowcase) between the athletes skin and the gel pack since these contain

chemicals that can cause burns.

Compression - using an elastic ace bandage or sleeve can help reduce the amount of swelling in the injured ankle. The wrap should have consistent tension all the way around and go from the toes to the bottom of the calf musculature. An easy capillary refill test will let you know if the wrap is too tight.

Elevation - elevating the injured ankle above the heart can help reduce the swelling by moving toward the heart. This also protects against blood pooling in the injured area causing more swelling.

Initial Exercises - complete these 1-2X daily for 1-2 weeks, ice after performing these exercises.

- Ankle Pumps - 50x
- Ankle ABC's - 2x
- Towel Curls - 5x
- Seated Toe Raises - 30x
- Calf towel stretch - 30s 4x

Exercise Progression - Once the athlete is able to full weight bear without pain, their pain and swelling have decreased or gone away completely and their strength has improved they can progress to these exercises. Icing after these exercises is still a good idea.

- Ankle range of motion with theraband - 30x
- Single Leg Stance balance - 30s 4x
- Standing toe raises - 30x
- Wall squats - 30x
- 6" step up's - 30x

Return to Play

The athlete should have no pain and minimal swelling, strength and range of motion within normal limits. The athlete should also be able to jog, run, sprint, and cut without pain. A Gradual return to play while following a functional progression is best. A functional progression should go from jogging, to running, then sprinting in a forward direction. After this can be done without pain cutting and sport specific activities may be added as tolerated. Icing after games, practices, running is a good way to prevent soreness and swelling that may occur.

Prevention

Once an athlete has suffered an ankle sprain they are more likely to experience this injury again. This can be prevented by following a good rehabilitation protocol and functional progression. Also continually completing strengthening and balance exercises even after return to play has occurred. Using a brace or tape while playing may also help prevent further injuries. Lastly knowing when to be seen by a qualified healthcare professional. If your injury is not progressively healing with proper treatment then seeking out further medical advice is recommended.