

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS BROCHURE

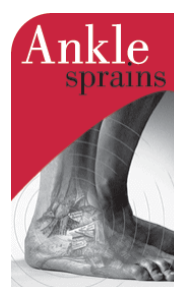
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What is an ankle sprain?

- An ankle sprain is an overstretching or tearing of one or more ankle ligaments
- Ankle injuries are the most frequent injuries in sports
- Sprains to the outer side of the ankle make up 85% of all ankle sprains

How do ankle strains occur?

- The ankle joint has many ligaments that provide stability by limiting the amount of side-to-side movement
- Ankle sprains are usually caused by an excessive rolling of the foot onto its outer edge so that the sole of the foot is turned inwards. This causes the ligaments on the outer side to overstretch and tear
- Individuals with a history of a previous ankle sprain are more likely to have repeated ankle sprains than individuals who have not injured it before





What should you do if an ankle strain occurs?

Apply the RICED procedure...

RICED procedure

REST

- Rest reduces further damage - stop activity as soon as the injury occurs.
- Avoid as much movement of the injured part as possible to limit further injury.
- Don't put any weight on the injured part of the body.



ICE

- Ice cools the tissue and reduces pain, swelling and bleeding.
- Place ice wrapped in a damp towel onto the injured area - don't put ice directly onto bare skin.
- Hold the ice pack firmly in place with a bandage.
- Keep ice on the injury for 20 minutes every two hours for the first 48 hours.



COMPRESSION

- Firm bandaging helps to reduce bleeding and swelling.
- Ensure that bandaging is not so tight that it cuts off circulation or causes tingling or pain past the bandage.
- Bandage the injury between ice treatments.



ELEVATION

- Elevation helps to stop bleeding and reduce swelling.
- Raise the injured area on a pillow for comfort and support.
- Keep the injured area raised as much as possible.



DIAGNOSIS

- Consult a medical professional (such as a doctor or physiotherapist) especially if you are worried about the injury, or if the pain or swelling gets worse.
- If the pain or swelling has not gone down significantly within 48 hours, also seek treatment.
- An accurate diagnosis is essential for proper rehabilitation of moderate to severe injuries.

What rehabilitation should follow an ankle strain?

The following recommendations serve as a guideline only.

Always seek the advice of a medical professional for a rehabilitation programme specific to you and your injury.

Range of motion

- Restoring normal range of motion is essential to allow full functional recovery of the ankle
- Pointing and flexing the foot, or tracing letters with the foot are good ways of improving range of motion following an ankle sprain

Cardiovascular fitness

- Keeping fit, although difficult when injured, will ensure peak performance and a lower risk of re-injury upon return to sport
- Try to find different types of exercise that will maintain fitness without making the injury worse
- Swimming is recommended early in ankle sprain rehabilitation. As healing progresses, pain-free cycling and walking can also be included

Strength

- Regaining strength in the injured ankle will help to stabilise the ankle joint
- Return to play is usually considered safe when 90% of pre-injury strength or 90% of the opposite ankle's strength (assuming that ankle is injury free) is achieved
- Strength can be measured by contracting against resistance provided by another person. Ask them to make a comparison between legs

Balance

- Balance and coordination need to be restored. Proprioception is the awareness of one's own body position and is important in balance and coordination
- Balance exercises help to re-educate proprioception and minimise the likelihood of future sprains
- Standing on one leg is a good example of a basic balance exercise
- Balance exercises can be made more difficult by doing them with your eyes closed or on an uneven/unstable surface (ie. a gravel pathway or a mattress)
- Physiotherapists may prescribe more complex balance exercises involving the use of equipment such as a mini-trampoline or a wobbleboard
- External supports such as braces and taping may also enhance proprioception by increasing awareness of the injured joint
- Bracing and taping will not necessarily prevent injuries reoccurring however

Psychological status

- Reduced confidence following an ankle sprain may impair an athletes ability to regain full functional capacity (e.g. running on uneven surfaces, sudden changes of direction and jumps)
- Gradually attempting more difficult agility tasks and setting realistic goals and timeframes may help to rebuild sporting confidence
- Return to competition is not advised until an individual has 100% confidence in their playing ability

Sport-specific rehabilitation

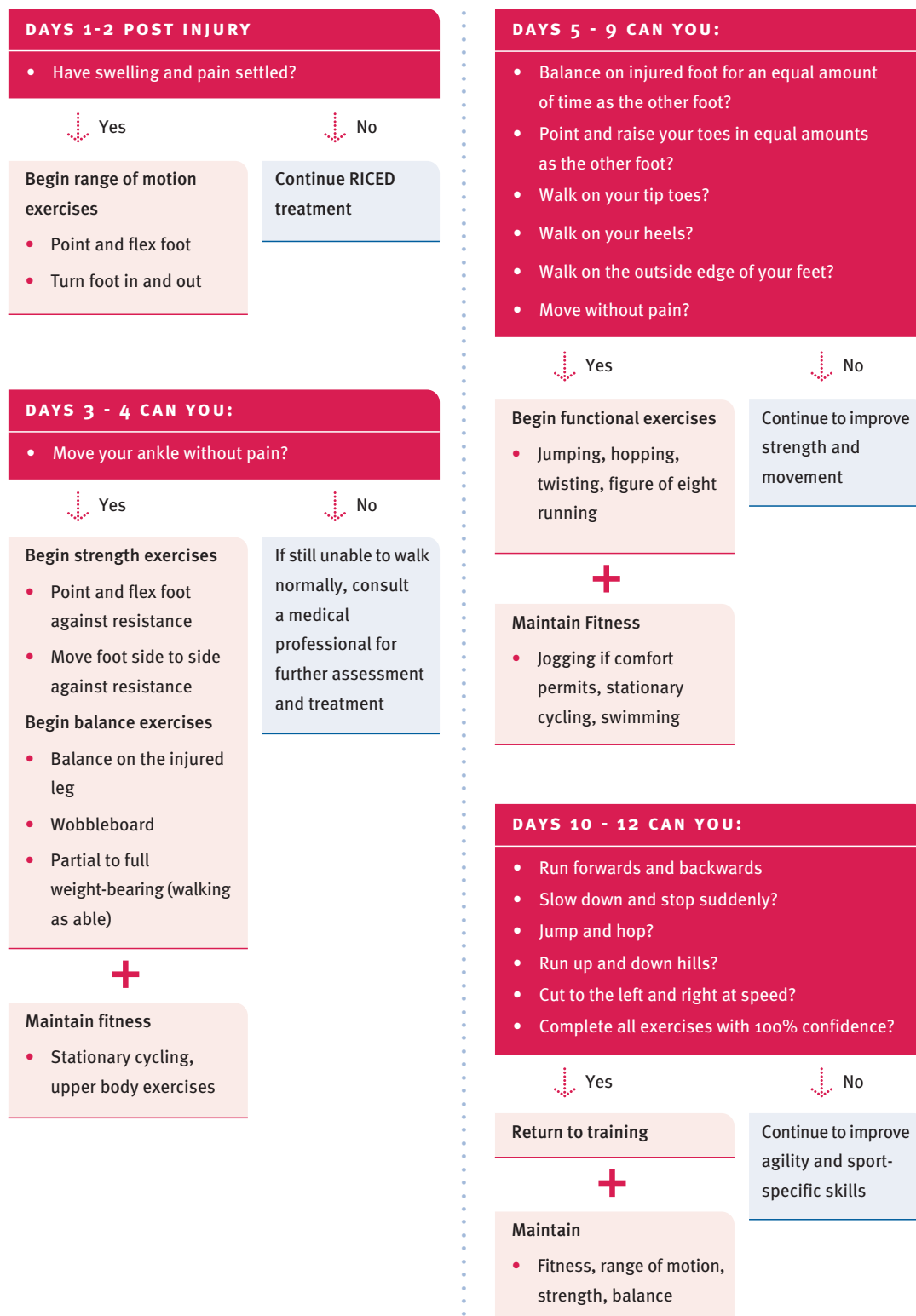
- When general function has been restored, rehabilitation should focus on preparing the ankle for sport-specific activity (e.g. jumping, landing, cutting or simply combining different elements such as run, step off the right foot, step off the left)
- As progress allows, the intensity should be increased (e.g. running at 1/2 speed to 3/4 speed to full speed) and other elements of the sport should be included (e.g. adding a ball skill or performing sequences i.e. run, step off the right foot, pass, step off the left foot, pass etc)

Ensure you are completely rehabilitated before returning to competition to minimise the risk of re-injury.



Example of a return to play strategy after a mild ankle strain

- NOTE: This is a guide only. Timeframes for rehabilitation and return to play vary depending on the nature and severity of the injury. Always seek the advice of a medical professional for a rehabilitation programme specific to you and your injury.



How can you reduce the risk of re-injury?

ALWAYS seek the advice of a medical professional before returning to sport. Inadequate rehabilitation and a premature return to sport will increase the risk of re-injury.

- Continue stretching, proprioception and strengthening exercises as part of a normal training routine
- Taping, bracing or wearing high-top shoes following adequate rehabilitation will assist with supporting the ankle. If possible, use braces rather than tape, as effective support provided by taping is generally reduced after 20 minutes of play. Ensure that the brace fits correctly, it complies with the rules of the game and it is suitable for you and the sport
- If there is a history of repeated ankle injury, wear an external ankle support
- In sports where cleated shoes/boots are worn (e.g. cricket, rugby and soccer) a change in footwear design may reduce the risk of re-injury
- Stay conditioned for the physical demands of the sport
- If ankle sprains continue to occur, consult a medical professional for advice on other possible contributing factors

