

Ankle sprain

What is an ankle sprain?

An ankle sprain is the tearing and stretching of the ligaments of the ankle. The sprain can be on the outside or inside of the ankle.

Most often the sprain is on the outside of the ankle. This is called a lateral sprain. It happens when the ankle is forced inward. Sometimes the sprain is on the inside of the ankle. This is called a medial sprain. This happens when the ankle is forced outward.

A high ankle sprain is higher up. It is caused when the foot is planted on the ground and then an excessive outwards twisting or forward bending of your leg on your foot.

What are the symptoms?

- Pain on the inside or outside of the ankle.
- Pain with walking, standing or climbing stairs.
- Swelling and inflammation.
- Bruising (usually purple color) of the ankle.
- Tender when touched.
- Decreased motion.
- With a high ankle sprain the pain would be above the ankle joint.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will review your activities. The sprain is diagnosed by the location of the pain, symptoms and a physical exam. Most often, an X-ray will be done to rule out a broken bone or fracture. In rare cases an MRI may need to be done.

How is it treated?

Pain medicine, decreased activity, resting and icing of the ankle may help with pain and swelling. Other treatments may include:

- Using crutches, bracing or taping. This will help protect the injury.
- Icing. Use a bag of crushed ice, or frozen peas or corn. You can reuse these items as an ice pack. **Do not eat** the corn or peas once they have been used as an ice pack.
 - Put a towel between skin and bag. If you put the ice pack directly on the skin, it may cause frost bite. Put the bag on the sore area.
 - Leave on for 15 to 20 minutes.
- Early motion of the ankles and toes as instructed by your healthcare provider.
- Using an elastic bandage (Ace® wrap). This puts pressure, called compression, on the ankle to help decrease swelling. Be sure to remove the wrap before going to bed.



How is it treated continued

- Elevating the ankle to help with swelling. When sitting or lying down, raise the ankle above the level of your heart.
- Ankle strengthening exercises may start as directed by your healthcare provider.
- Treatment and healing takes longer with high ankle sprains.

If the ankle does not heal like it should, it is more likely to get sprained again. Proper physical therapy may help prevent repeated injuries.

What follow-up is needed?

Follow-up may be needed with the physical therapist. Regular physical therapy sessions may be needed to help with healing. Therapy will also help you get back to previous activities.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.