

Lateral Ankle Sprain

An ankle sprain is usually caused by accidentally twisting or turning your ankle in an awkward way. Most of the time, the injury will resolve within a few weeks with the correct management and exercises.

The ankle is a complex joint, with the ability to hinge up and down, turn in and out, and rotate. The ankle gains its stability from the structural arrangement of the bones, and from the ligaments that connect the bones together.

A sprain occurs because one or more of these ligaments are over stretched, and in severe cases torn. It's usually caused by a traumatic incident, such as a sudden change of direction while playing sport, or a slip off the edge of a curb.

Following an ankle sprain, it is very common to experience swelling and bruising. The bruising may track down your foot, so don't be alarmed if the injury appears to have affected more than just your ankle.



Follow the acronym RICE. Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation. These techniques are particularly important in the first 48 to 72 hours.

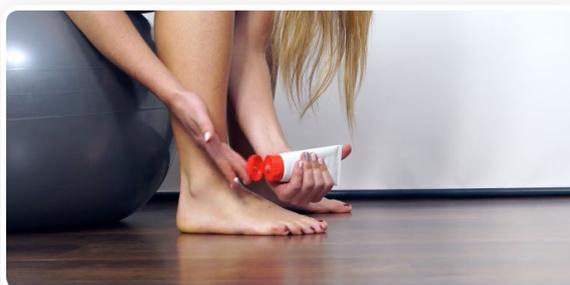
Avoid walking on your ankle too much in the first day or two. You may find using elbow crutches helps in this initial phase.

Inflammation is a normal response to injury, but to minimise the amount of swelling you experience place some ice, wrapped in a damp towel, over the swollen area for no longer than 20 minutes. It is important to check your ankle regularly as ice can burn the skin.

A simple tubi-grip or ankle support can help to reduce the swelling in this initial phase. It will also give the joint stability while the ligaments are weakened.

Please note, a support is not advisable to use long term. Continual use of an ankle support will prevent the body's own stability mechanisms recovering.

Resting with the foot above hip height is a good technique to help manage the symptoms of swelling. While medication is not usually needed longer term, you may find the use of oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatories or painkillers help to manage your symptoms in the first week.



Following the first few days, it becomes important to stretch your ankle to prevent any long term stiffness. The gradual addition of strength and balance exercises will help to regain stability around your joint. This will reduce the likelihood that subsequent injuries will occur. Your clinician will guide you through these specific exercises, to ensure your rehabilitation is done at a steady rate with your recovery.