

How to Care for Your Ankle Sprain

How do I treat my sprained ankle?

There are several things you should do to help your ankle heal:

Stretch

Gently stretch the ankle in all directions while you are sitting down. Do this at least three times per day.

Walk

Walking will make the ankle heal faster and stronger. If you can put weight on your ankle, try walking around the house or a longer distance, if pain allows.

Apply ice

Put ice or cold packs on the ankle for 10 to 20 minutes. Do this every two hours while you are awake, until the swelling is gone.

Wear a brace

If your doctor gives you a brace or air cast, wear it for four weeks when you are walking.

Take medicine, if needed

If you need medicine to help with the pain, there are several over-the-counter options, such as acetaminophen (one brand: Tylenol), ibuprofen (one brand: Motrin), or aspirin. Ask your doctor how much medicine you should be taking.

Exercise

After your ankle heals, you should exercise to prevent future sprains. Try doing these exercises for 10 to 15 minutes every other day:

- Balance on one leg for 30 to 60 seconds
- Balance on one leg and play catch with a partner
- Move your ankle in all directions against an elastic band
- Stand with one foot forward, then jump and land with the other foot forward
- Stand with your toes on a low step, drop your heels down, and then raise them up
- Squat down, then jump up and land softly

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

AAFP's Patient Education Resource

Web site: <http://familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/prevention-wellness/staying-healthy/first-aid/ankle-sprains-healing-and-preventing-injury.html>

Active.com

Web site: http://www.active.com/fitness/Articles/12_Ways_to_Build_Ankle_Strength_for_Top_Performance.htm

June 2012

This handout is provided to you by your family doctor and the American Academy of Family Physicians. Other health-related information is available from the AAFP online at <http://familydoctor.org>.

This information provides a general overview and may not apply to everyone. Talk to your family doctor to find out if this information applies to you and to get more information on this subject. Copyright © 2012 American Academy of Family Physicians. Individuals may photocopy this material for their own personal reference, and physicians may photocopy for use with their own patients. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF
FAMILY PHYSICIANS