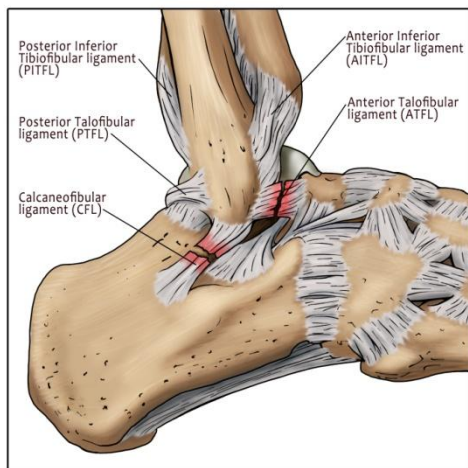


Ankle Sprains

Ankle Sprains are common in activities which are performed on uneven surfaces or which require rapid changes of direction. This typically occurs in a number of sporting and non-sporting environments, with the mechanism of injury usually involving an inwards twisting movement of the foot and ankle (ankle inversion). Damage to the lateral ligament structures of the ankle is what results, causing swelling, bruising and pain, which have a large impact on daily tasks such as walking and bearing weight through the affected limb.



Initial Management

Over the first 72 hours after suffering an ankle sprain, decreasing swelling, bruising and pain are the main goals. This can be achieved through the implementation of the 'RICER' protocol which aims to reduce inflammation around the ankle joint and prevent further damage to surrounding structures. 'RICER' stands for Rest, Ice, Compress, Elevate and Refer.

- **Rest** – Over the first 24 hours, a period of unloading through the ankle joint will allow pain to settle and will limit further sensitization to surrounding structures. Prolonged rest can have deleterious effects on lower limb function and muscle strength, therefore should be avoided.
- **Ice & Compression** – The use of ice is an important pain management strategy following an ankle injury. Applications for a 20 minute period between 2 hour spaces have demonstrated positive benefits. This should be completed in conjunction with the use of a compression bandage, which helps to further limit the development of swelling in the area. It is believed that compression is the most important strategy in minimizing swelling.



- **Elevation** – Elevating the ankle above the level of the heart will limit the development of further swelling through the ankle joint by using gravity to draw excessive fluid away from the area.
- **Refer** – Seek treatment from a physiotherapist for treatment and management of pain.



Approximately 40% of ankle injuries result in chronic (long term) cases. This occurs due to a lack of treatment, incomplete rehabilitation or due to returning to sport or activity too soon. The number one risk factor for a future ankle sprain is a previous ankle sprain, therefore seeking appropriate treatment and completing a sound rehabilitation is key. Other risk factors include a lack of strength, range of motion, joint position sense and balance; rehabilitation from a physiotherapist aims to target these risk factors to decrease the risk of you suffering from a future ankle injury.

[Treatment, Management and Prevention of Ankle Injuries](#)

Treatment from a physiotherapist is important after suffering from an ankle sprain. Your physiotherapist will use techniques such as soft tissue massage, dry needling, joint mobilizations and taping to help manage your pain and symptoms. Through their assessment, your physiotherapist will identify any impairment in balance, muscle strength and joint range of movement, and prescribe you with specific exercises to improve these.

A large part of management of ankle injuries involves exercise therapy. As mentioned above, a physiotherapist will be able to prescribe you with specific exercises which aim to improve your joint range of motion, muscle strength and balance. These exercises will be progressed as your symptoms improve and should be performed on a regular basis to ensure a sound rehabilitation program is completed. If your goal is to return to sport, your exercises will be prescribed to replicate the demands of your particular sport to ensure that any future ankle injury is prevented. Ensure that you take on advice from your physiotherapist in regards to when to return to sport. It is a common occurrence that athletes return to sport too early and suffer increased damage through their already injured ankle joint!



Prevention is key in regards to ankle sprains. Completing your exercises regularly will be one factor that ensures you prevent any future sprain. The use of ankle braces or taping are an effective strategy to prevent future sprains, however you should slowly phase out of using them in your particular sport as you become more comfortable on your ankle. There is no evidence to show one is better than the other, so it is down to personal preference whether you buy a brace or regularly tape your ankle!

All the best in health!

Matt Fulco

Physiotherapist

BodySmart Health Centre

Matt has extensive experience and an interest in the treatment and rehabilitation of ankle injuries. Matt has provided first hand injury management services to various football and soccer clubs and understands the demands associated with these sports.