

## Treating the Ankle Sprain

Ankle 'sprains' are very common injuries. Typically the ankle is rolled either inward (inversion sprain) or outward (eversion sprain). Inversion sprains cause pain along the outside of the ankle and are the most common type. Pain along the inside of the ankle may represent a more serious injury to the tendons or to the ligaments that support the arch and should always be evaluated by a doctor.

A sprain can be difficult to differentiate from a fracture (broken bone) without an X-Ray. If you are unable to bear weight after this type of injury, or if there is significant swelling or deformity, you should seek medical treatment from a doctor (MD or DO). This may be your primary care physician or pediatrician, an emergency department, or an orthopedist depending on the severity of the injury.

Most ankle sprains do not require surgery, and minor sprains are best treated with a functional rehabilitation program. "R.I.C.E." is a useful term and stands for "Rest", "Ice", "Compression" and "Elevation."

The following exercises should be performed in stages once the initial pain and swelling have receded, usually within 5-7 days. First is restoration of ankle range of motion, which should begin when bearing weight on the affected extremity is tolerated. Once ankle range of motion has been completely or near completely restored, the ankle must be strengthened. Coupled with strengthening, is the concept of return of proprioception, or the ability of the ankle to feel 'stable' and comfortable. Consider these home exercises when recuperating from such an injury. Perform them twice per day. Remember, if things are worsening or have not begun to improve within a few days of the injury, see an orthopedist.

## The R.I.C.E Formula

**"Rest"** the foot and limit weight bearing. Use crutches if necessary, but if there is no fracture you are safe to put some weight on the leg. An ankle brace often helps control swelling and adds stability while the ligaments are healing.

**"Ice"** on the ankle will also help. Don't put ice directly on the skin (keep a thin piece of cloth such as a pillow case between the ice bag and the skin) and don't ice more than 20 minutes at a time to avoid frost bite.

**"Compression"** can be helpful in controlling swelling and is usually accomplished with an ACE bandage.

**"Elevate"** the foot by propping it up above the waist or heart as needed. Remember, the more the foot is down, the more it will swell and hurt.