

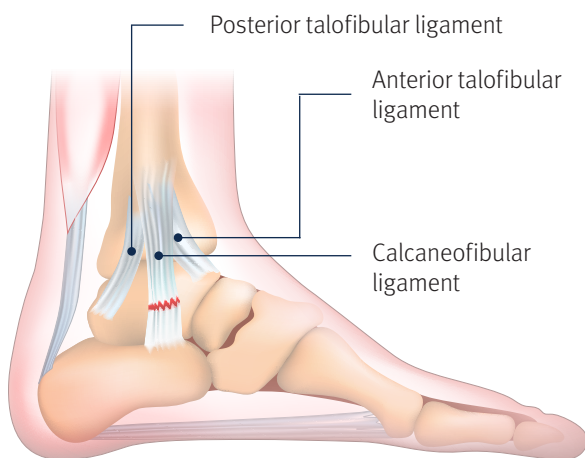
# Ankle sprain

Information and exercise sheet



## What is an ankle sprain?

Ankle sprains are one of the most common ankle injuries. A sprain occurs when you 'roll your ankle' which stretches or tears the ligaments. Ligaments are strong bands of tissue that help support the ankle.



## What to expect

Ankle sprains can be mild, with over stretching of the ligaments, to more severe when there is a complete tear. Common symptoms after an ankle sprain are pain, swelling, bruising and reduced movement. The pain is often worse in the first few days and then starts to get better.

You may need to see a physiotherapist to assist with getting the strength and movement back in your ankle. Slowly increase your activity as the pain improves. Most ankle sprains are better within 6 weeks. Ankle sprains rarely require surgery. If you have ongoing pain after 6 weeks, contact your health professional for further assessment.

## What can you do to help your recovery?

### ✓ DO R.I.C.E

To help with your recovery, it is best to follow the 'RICE' principle. Do this over the **first 3-7 days**.

- **Rest:** avoid activities that significantly increase your pain.
- **Ice:** cooling an injury helps to reduce both pain and swelling. Apply ice or a cold pack to the injury for 20 minutes every 2 hours when awake. Wrap ice or a cold pack in a tea towel to protect your skin and remove it if it is too cold, to prevent ice burn.
- **Compression:** apply with tubigrip, a wrap bandage or compression stocking. Ensure the bandage does not increase pain or restrict blood flow. Monitor for new colour changes, discolouration of the toes, new pins and needles and numbness.
- **Elevate:** your ankle as much as possible during the day.

### ✗ AVOID H.A.R.M

To help with your recovery, avoid 'HARM' for the **first 7 days**.

- **Heat:** increases blood flow and swelling to the ankle.
- **Alcohol:** increases blood flow and swelling. You may also be more likely to reinjure the ankle.
- **Re-Injury:** protect your ankle until it heals adequately. Avoid sports until advised by a health professional.
- **Massage:** can slow the healing if it is started too early.

You may be fitted with a boot and given crutches to help with your recovery. Your health professional will advise you of how much body weight you are allowed to put through the injured leg and when to remove or wear your boot.

## Pain management

Pain relieving medicine may also be recommended in the early phases of recovery. Ask your health professional for further advice.



## Exercises

Exercises can help with your recovery by reducing swelling and ankle stiffness.

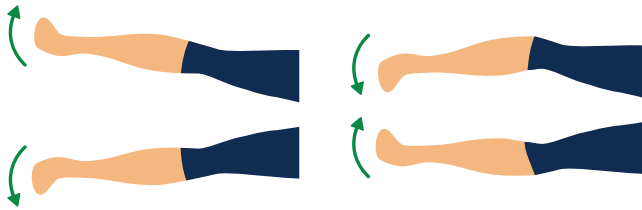
**Start these exercises after 2 days.** Gently perform the following exercises **4 times a day**:

### Ankle movement

Point your foot up and down. Do not push into severe pain; repeat **10 times**.

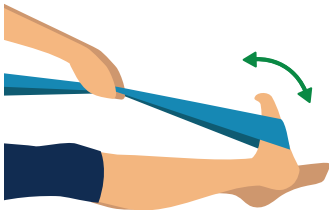


Keep your leg still and turn your feet toward each other, then away, repeat **10 times**.



### Calf stretch

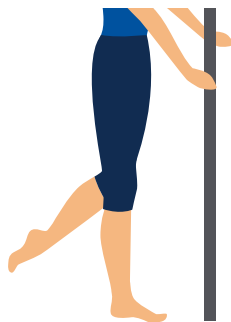
Use a towel to stretch your foot towards you, hold for **10 seconds**, repeat **3 times**.



## Exercises after 1 week, or when comfortable:

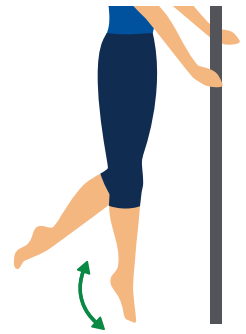
### Balance

Stand near something for support. Try and balance on one leg and hold for **30 seconds**, repeat **3 times**. You can do this on both legs.



### Calf raise

Stand near something for support. Raise up and down on your toes, repeat **3 sets of 10 times each**.



## Follow up

It is important to attend recommended follow up appointments to guide your healing and recovery.

These appointments may include:

- General Practitioner (GP or doctor)
- Orthopaedic or fracture clinic
- Outpatient hospital physiotherapy
- Private practice physiotherapist.

## Seeking help

Please see a health care professional or attend your nearest emergency department if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- neurovascular concerns - constant tingling and numbness, changes of colour to the lower limb, worsening and unmanageable pain
- signs of infection - redness, heat, swollen, fevers, unwell.

For other general medical problems see your local doctor or healthcare professional. **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call. In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).