

Ankle Sprain

The instructions in this pamphlet will help you recover after an ankle sprain. If your ankle injury is severe, your physician may recommend further treatment that is not described here. Most people with an ankle sprain can walk normally within 10– 14 days of the injury. Follow the instructions given to you in the emergency department including any recommended pain medications.



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What to Expect

For the first 48 hours, the most important steps to recovery are summarized as “**POLICE**”: **P**rotection, **O**ptimal **L**oading, **I**ce, **C**ompression and **E**levation.

PROTECTION

Use a walking aid (like crutches) if you are not able to put weight on your ankle at first.

OPTIMAL LOADING

Return to a normal “heel-toe” pattern of walking as soon as you can tolerate: your heel should contact the floor first, then roll your weight forward to push off from your toe.



Gradually add more weight through your injured ankle. Take short walks often throughout the day rather than one long walk. If you need to sit or lie down, make sure you try to get up as often as you can.

Recommended Follow-Up

- ☐ Follow up in __ days.
Name of Provider
Reason
Date/Time
Location
Contact Info
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



ICE

Before using ice, make sure you have feeling in the skin around your ankle, so you can monitor if your skin becomes too cold.

Wrap ice packs or a bag of frozen vegetables in a thin towel and place on your skin. Apply ice for the first 48 hours or anytime it feels more swollen or painful. Use the ice pack for 15 minutes at a time, then allow skin to return to normal temperature before re-applying. Monitor your skin for redness and changes in feeling.

COMPRESSION

If suggested by your doctor or physiotherapist, or if you feel it helps, wrap your ankle in a tensor bandage, sleeve, or brace. **DO NOT** wrap too tightly.

Avoid sleeping with the tensor bandage on.

ELEVATION

Elevate your ankle above your heart for the first two days or if the swelling increases after activity. While elevated, pump your ankle up and down (like pushing down and releasing a gas pedal). This motion may help increase the blood flow and decrease swelling in your leg.

SEE A PHYSIOTHERAPIST

It is strongly recommended to see a physiotherapist as soon as you are able. To find a physiotherapist near you, go to: bcphysio.org/find-a-physio-clinic.



When to Get Help

Go to a walk-in clinic, see your health care provider or call 811 (711) if:

- You have questions or need for more information.
- Your pain or swelling has not improved or is worsening after two weeks.
- You are unable to bear weight on the injured ankle or the ankle seems very unstable, even after a significant period of rest.

- You feel persistent numbness or tingling sensations in your foot or toes.
- You see significant changes in the colour of the skin of the affected foot (pale or blue) or the skin feels extra warm.

To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca.



How to Care for Yourself at Home

Daily Recovery Exercises

Begin the following exercises as soon as you are able. They will prevent future sprains, long-term ankle pain and arthritis. Do them **at least 3 times a day**. It is normal to feel some discomfort during these exercises, but your symptoms should not get worse. If you experience intense pain while putting weight on the ankle, use a cane or crutches for the time being. If you aren't sure how to perform these exercises, review them with your health care provider.

ANKLE CIRCLES

Move ankle in large circles. Do for 1 minute in each direction.



ANKLE ALPHABET

Write the alphabet with your toes, making the letters as large as you can.



ANKLE SLIDES

Sit and slowly slide injured ankle and foot back until you feel a stretch. Keep your heel on the ground throughout the movement. Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.



Ankle Sprain Discharge Instructions - continued

STANDING CALF STRETCHES

Stand with sprained ankle at the back, toes pointed forward, heel flat on the ground. Keep back knee straight and forward knee bent. Lean forward until feel stretch in calf of injured leg.



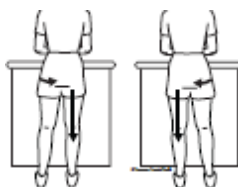
Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.

Next, hold same position but bend the back knee until feeling stretch in lower calf.

Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.

BALANCE: WEIGHT-SHIFT IN STANDING

Hold a counter for balance. Gently squeeze buttock muscles. Slowly shift weight to injured side, then shift weight back to other side. Repeat 10 times.



BALANCE: STAND ON ONE LEG (TRY ONLY WHEN WEIGHT-SHIFT IS EASY)

Stand in front of a stable surface. Gently squeeze buttock muscles. Lift one foot off the ground.



Hold for 10 seconds, repeat 10 times on each leg.

Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/ankle-sprain/

Notes:

Additional Information

- Watch:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3pPMW8n36I>
- More ankle recovery exercises:
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/illnesses-conditions/rehabilitation-and-exercise/sprained-ankle-rehabilitation-exercises>

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