

# Ankle Sprains

Treatment and Restoration of Motion



# Ankle sprains

## Ankle anatomy

The ankle is a complex joint made up of three bones: the tibia, the fibula and the talus. These three bones are connected by several ligaments that help stabilize the joint. When these ligaments are overstretched, it is referred to as an ankle sprain.

An ankle sprain can be mild, moderate or severe depending on how badly the ligaments are damaged. Mild sprains occur when the ligaments are stretched or

slightly torn. Moderate sprains occur when ligaments are partly torn. Severe sprains occur when ligaments are completely torn. The more severe the pain, the less weight you'll be able to put on it.

After your injury, your physician will work with you to determine the course of treatment. If treated quickly and properly, ankle sprains can heal well, allowing safe return to activity.

## PHASE I: Treatment

Immediately after your injury, start **PRICE**.

P PROTECT	R REST	I ICE	C COMPRESS	E ELEVATE
Protect your ankle from further injury by bracing it. Semi-rigid braces lead to a faster recovery time than tape or elastic wrap.	Rest from all activities that cause pain. Give your ankle time to heal properly.	Place an ice bag on the ankle for 15-20 minutes. Repeat 4-5 times a day.	Use an elastic bandage to provide support and help reduce swelling. Loosen the wrap if your toes start to turn blue or feel cold.	Elevate the ankle above heart level until swelling subsides.

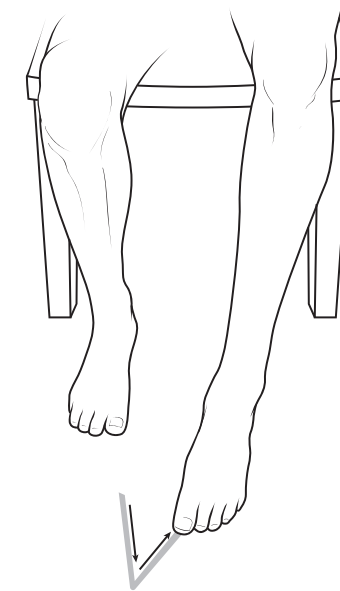
Your doctor may suggest an oral anti-inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen. This relieves pain and helps reduce any swelling. Be sure to take your medication as directed.

## PHASE II: Restoration of motion

### Stretching

As soon as you can tolerate pressure on the ball of your foot, begin stretching the ankle using some of the following exercises.

#### ANKLE ALPHABET



Using your injured ankle and foot only, trace the letters of the alphabet. Perform A to Z.

Repeat 1 - 2 times per set. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

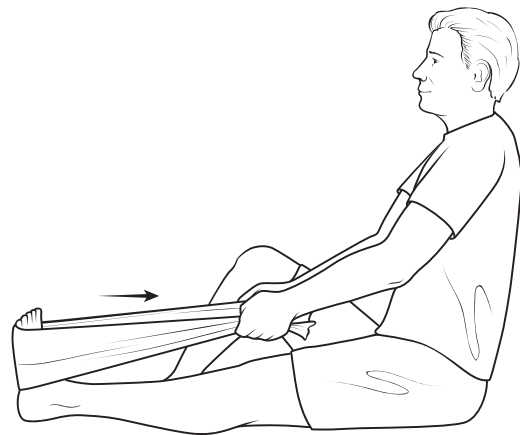
#### TOE CURL: UNILATERAL



With injured foot resting on a towel, slowly bunch up the towel by curling toes until towel is fully rolled around/under your foot.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

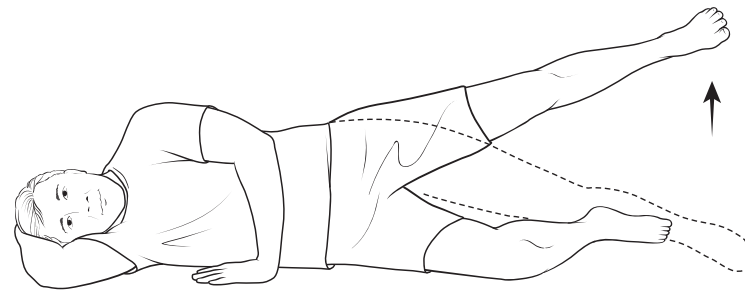
**STRETCHING CALF - TOWEL**



Sit with knee straight and towel looped around injured foot. Gently pull on towel until stretch is felt in your calf. Hold for 20 - 30 seconds.

Repeat 4 times per set. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

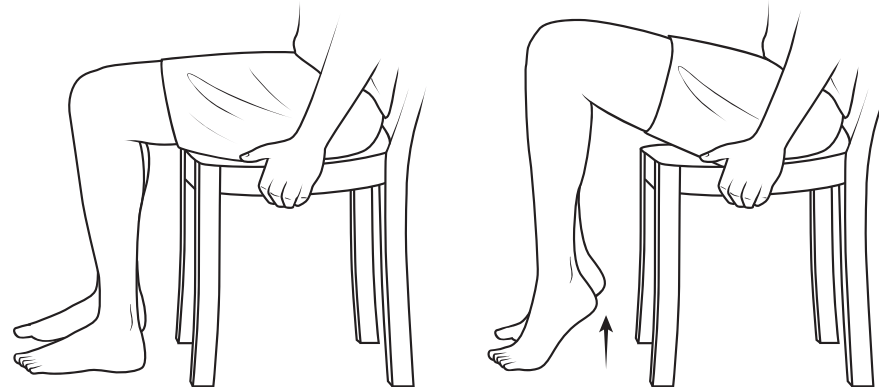
**STRENGTHENING: HIP ABDUCTION (SIDE-LYING)**



Begin lying on your side with bottom knee bent and top leg lying straight. Raise your upper leg towards the ceiling keeping your knee straight.

Repeat 10 times per set. Do 2 sets per session. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

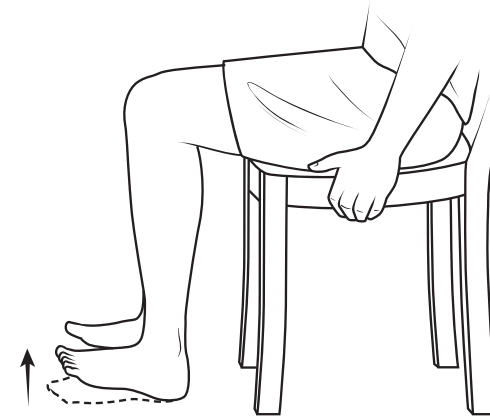
**HEEL RAISE (SITTING)**



Raise heels, keeping toes on the floor.

Repeat 20 times per set. Do 2 sets per session. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

**TOE RAISE (SITTING)**



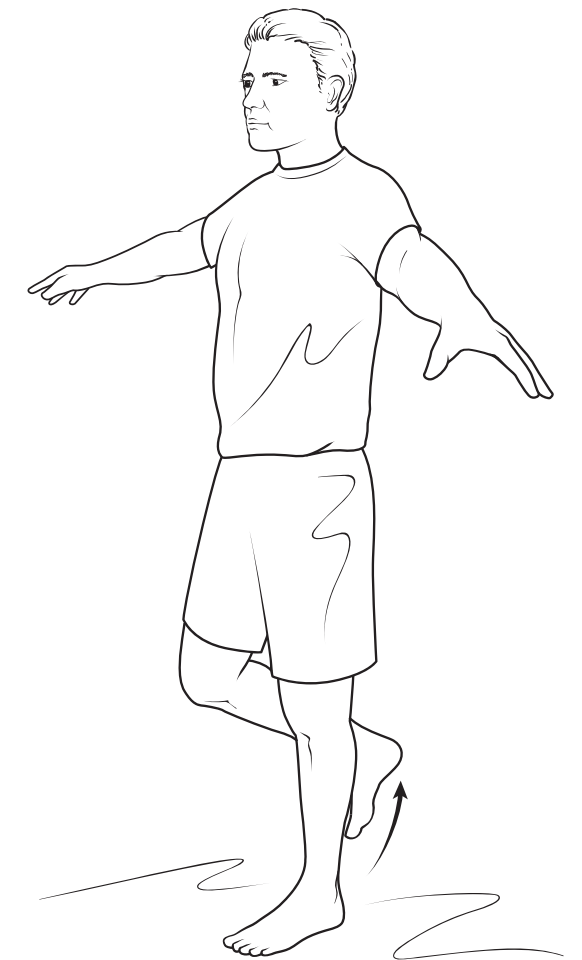
Raise toes, keeping heels on the floor.

Repeat 20 times per set. Do 2 sets per session. Do 2 - 3 sessions per day.

**Strengthening**

A crucial part of your rehabilitation is strengthening the muscles that support the ankle. Start using some of the following exercises to strengthen your ankle.

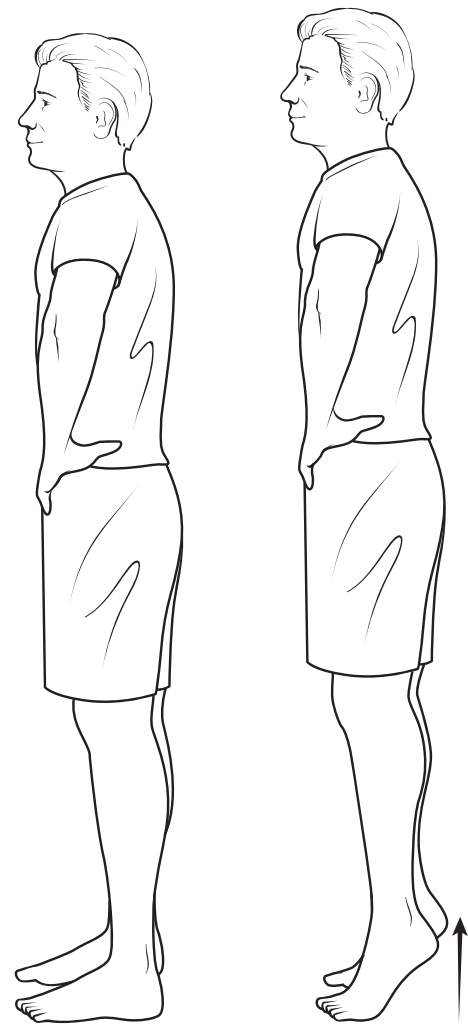
**BALANCE: UNILATERAL (STANDING)**



Attempt to balance on injured leg. Hold as long as possible, working up to 60 seconds. Initially perform near a surface to hold on to as needed.

Repeat 2 times per set. Do 2 - 3 sets per day.

**HEEL RAISE: BILATERAL (STANDING)**



Rise on balls of feet.

Repeat 15 - 20 times per set. Do 2 sets per session.  
Do 2 - 3 sessions per day, as able.

**TOE RAISE (STANDING)**



Rock back on your heels as you are standing.

Repeat 15 - 20 times per set. Do 2 sets per session.  
Do 2 - 3 sessions per day, as able.

**Other exercises**

**Cycling**

Riding a stationary bike is an excellent way to apply healthy stresses to your ankle and work on range of motion. 15 to 20 minutes of easy cycling is recommended while wearing your ankle brace.

**Walking**

When you can bear weight on your ankle pain free and without assistance, you should make walking part of your rehabilitation program. Start with 15 minutes of walking at a comfortable pace. Each day add 3 minutes and very gradually increase your walking speed.

**Prevention**

On average, a typical ankle sprain will take approximately 2 - 4 weeks to heal. Higher degree sprains may take 6 - 8 weeks for recovery. Swelling may last longer even without pain.

Contact your physician if you experience pain, swelling, locking or instability 2 - 3 months after a sprain.

**If you would like further education regarding exercises to help heal your ankle sprain, please call 630.933.1500 to schedule a consultation with a Northwestern Medicine physical therapist. TTY for the hearing impaired 630.933.4833.**



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