

Ankle Sprains

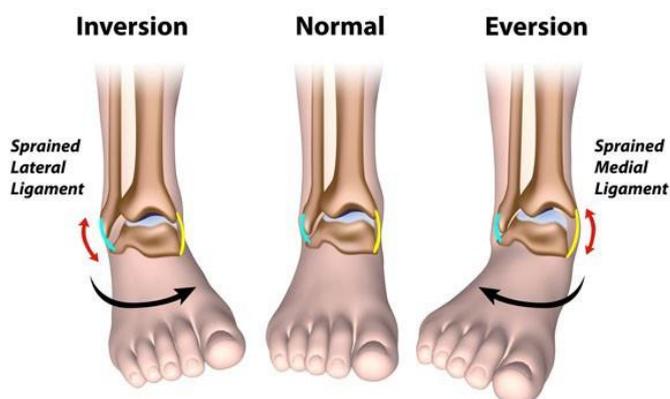
Paediatric Management Advice Leaflet

What is a sprained ankle?

Ankle sprains occur when the ligaments around the foot and ankle are overstretched during an injury such as sudden twisting, which may cause some fibres to tear. The severity of the sprain will differ depending on how much stretch has occurred.

What are the symptoms of a sprain?

- Pain around the joint.
- Swelling.
- Bruising.
- Pain when walking or moving.



Pain relief

Consult your GP or local pharmacist for advice as to which medication is suitable for your child to take.

Important signs and symptoms to look out for

If your child experiences any of the following symptoms, please seek further urgent medical advice:

- Significant swelling
- Worsening, severe pain in the foot and ankle
- Severe night pain
- Night sweats
- Loss of sensation or persistent pins and needles/numbness in the foot/ankle/toes
- Abnormal weakness in the foot i.e. foot drop
- Altered colour or unusual sweating of the foot/ankle
- Constant givingway or unable to weight bear through the foot/ankle

Only continue to read if you have none of the above symptoms

Recovery and Rehabilitation

Healing times

- Ankle sprains will usually heal within a few weeks with conservative management. **Swelling** and **bruising** may still be present for up to 10 days.
- Normal activity levels are usually restored after 6-8 weeks. The risk of re-injury is higher in the first 4-6 weeks.
- As your child completes the exercises provided they may notice some swelling and aching. This is normal. Should this happen, re-apply ice packs and elevate your leg to help reduce the swelling. There is no need to stop playing or exercising unless it is causing significant pain.

Physiotherapy

- It is important to keep your child's ankle moving even when painful. Evidence has shown that walking and completing basic exercises helps the sprained ligaments to heal. Try to get your child to walk as normally as possible, putting their heel down first and pushing off through their toes.
- In most cases your child will not need to be seen by a Physiotherapist for rehabilitation. Following exercises provided in the leaflet and retraining your balance will help with recovery from an ankle sprain.
- If after 3 weeks your child is still having problems, please contact the Paediatric Physiotherapy service on the number provided to book an assessment.

Exercises — Phase 1 — Movement

Completing the below exercises will help maintain range of movement and reduce swelling. Try to complete the exercises 3-4 times per day and walk normally as pain allows.

Dorsiflexion and plantar flexion

Slowly move your ankles up towards the ceiling and lower them back down to point towards the floor. Repeat 10-15 times



Ankle rotations

Slowly rotate your feet in a circular motion. Repeat 5-10 times.



Eversion and Inversion

Turn your feet outwards and then inwards. Repeat 10-15 times.



Exercises — Phase 2 — Strengthening

Once you can complete phase 1 comfortably, progress to phase 2.



Seated heel raise

Sit with your knees hip distance apart and feet flat on the floor. Slowly push through your toes and lift your heels off the floor before lowering back down. Repeat 10-15 times.

Seated isometric eversion

Sit on a chair or on the floor. Cross your feet and put the outer edges of your little toes together. Press the outer edges of your little toes together. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.



Seated isometric dorsiflexion

Sit on a chair. Put one foot on top of the other foot. Try to lift the foot that is underneath while preventing any movement with the foot that is on top. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

Exercises — Phase 3 — Progressive strengthening

Once you can complete the exercises in phase 2 comfortably, progress to phase 3.

Standing heel raise with support

Stand holding onto a support with your feet hip distance apart, feet and knees facing forward. Push through your toes and slowly lift your heels of the floor. Hold for 5 seconds before bringing them slowly back down. Repeat 10-15 times.





Toe raise against a wall

Leaning against a wall with your feet hip distance apart and slightly in front of the wall. Slowly lift your toes up towards the ceiling and hold for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times. You can make this harder by completing it on one leg.

Single leg balance

Standing next to a support, slowly lift one leg in the air and try to keep your balance for as long as possible. Aim for 60 seconds. Repeat 3 times on your injured leg.



Exercises — Phase 4 — Single leg strength and balance

Once you are able to complete the exercises in phase 3 comfortably, move on to phase 4. To help prevent further injuries, it is important to work on single leg strength and balance.



Standing single leg heel raise with support

Stand holding onto a support with your feet hip distance apart with your foot facing forward. Slowly lift your heel off the ground whilst holding the other foot in the air. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat 3 times.

Star balance

Standing on your injured leg. Maintain your balance whilst reaching out with your other leg forwards, to the left, right and backwards. Repeat 3 times.



Paediatric Physiotherapy Service	Author: Physiotherapy
ID No: PHYSIO - 001 – Ankle Sprain	Version: 004
Date of Issue: April 2020	Review Date: April 2023
Contact details	
Paediatric Physiotherapy Service Tel: 01282 803587	