

# A Quick Guide to Ankle Sprains



A sprain is a condition in which ligaments, a tough band of tissues, get stretched or torn. This generally occurs when the joint is twisted or turned into an awkward position. When such a situation occurs, ligaments get stretched beyond their range of motion.

Ankle sprains are common as being in the lower extremity makes the ankle highly prone to twists and turns. The ligaments present on the outside part of the ankle are majorly affected by ankle sprains.

Ligaments not only help stabilize the joint but also prevent the excessive movement of the joint. So, when the ligaments in the ankle are forced to move/stretch beyond their range of motion, discomfort around the joint

occurs. Although surgery is rare, serious ankle sprains may require ligament repair or reconstruction surgery.

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### **How Severe Ankle Sprains Could be?**

The severity of ankle sprains can be classified into 3 grades:

**Grade 1** – Mild pain is experienced in grade 1 sprains as a result of minor injury. The person can walk after the injury and the ankle remains stable. Stiffness and swelling may be noticed in the ankle.

**Grade 2** – A partial ligament tear is experienced in grade 2 sprains because of a bit more serious injury. The ankle becomes a bit unstable with a restricted range of motion. Tenderness to touch will be there in the ankle and pain will be there at the time of walking.

**Grade 3** – A most severe form of ankle sprain is grade 3. A complete ligament tear is experienced in grade 3 ankle sprains along with ankle instability. Due to this, the person cannot walk. Intense pain along with severe bruising and swelling may be experienced.

Grade 1 ankle sprains can be managed at home with self-care but for grades 2 & 3 professional help will be required.

## **What Are the Causes of Ankle Sprains?**

Forceful movement of the ankle beyond its capacity causes ankle sprains. A ligament stretch or tear is also noticed in the case of ankle sprains. This could occur because of:

Twisting of the ankle as a result of a fall

Awkward landing on foot while jumping or playing sports

Using improper surfaces for running or doing exercise

Someone stepping on your foot

## **How Ankle Sprains Are Diagnosed?**

The diagnosis of ankle sprains is done with a physical examination where the healthcare service provider looks for tenderness, painful movements, and range of motion. To confirm the severity of the condition, several imaging tests will be ordered:

X-ray

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)

CT scan

Ultrasound

## **What is the Treatment for Ankle Sprains?**

Correct diagnosis of the condition is important to decide the best treatment. Mild cases of the condition can be managed with self-care and that includes rest, ice, compression, and elevation. Over-the-counter pain medicine may also be required to improve pain.

To improve the strength and flexibility of the joint, physical therapy may be suggested. The patient may be required to use assistive devices to walk and in certain cases, a cast may be applied to immobilize the joint.

Surgery is rarely performed to repair or reconstruct the ligament.

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