

Spraining of the ankle is a very common condition. There are estimated to be at least 300 000 admissions to A & E in the UK for ankle sprains and related injuries each year and 42 000 of these are 'severe' ^[1].

An ankle sprain involves the straining or tearing of the ligaments which provide stability and sensation around your ankle.

Most usually the ligaments affected are the ones on the outside of the ankle (lateral ligaments). More severe sprains can also involve other ligaments and soft tissues including those on inside of the ankle (medial ligaments), muscles on the outside of your leg or bony damage where the ligaments attach.

The most common way of spraining your ankle is to 'go over' on it like this



It can be related to:

- Having done it before
- Footwear (more likely in high heels for example)
- Uneven/undulating surfaces
- Weakness in some of the muscles around the ankle

Initially when the ankle is sprained it may well be painful and swollen. You can best deal with this using **R.I.C.E.** - **Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation** – particularly within the first 48 hours. During this time, it may be worth using elbow crutches to minimise forces through the ankle and allow optimal healing. Your Premier physiotherapist can also help you with this. Depending on the severity, it may also be worth at this stage receiving an X-ray to exclude the possibility that there has been bony damage to the ankle.

It's then very important to get **proper rehabilitation** which enables full recovery in the ankle. A lot of people make the mistake to think that an ankle injury is minor and will right itself with time – they can then be left with a long-term dodgy ankle, which is very debilitating and significantly affects the ability to perform.

As well as regaining the strength and movement about your ankle, it's especially important to **retrain the sensation** ^[2]. The ligaments which are damaged in an ankle sprain, provide information to your brain about where your ankle is. When they are damaged, your sense of the ankle is damaged and you become more likely to put the ankle into a bad position where it will be injured again. This is a major reason why ankles are often damaged and damaged again. It is therefore very important that you work with your physiotherapist to retrain this sense. It is also important to **rehabilitate the ankle specifically** to prepare it for the demands of the sport or activity you want to get back to. Physiotherapists are the experts in doing this.

For a **FREE 15-minute Physio Assessment** please contact the gym reception, details available on our website, or our Head Office on **020 7687 7600**.

1. S A Bridgman, D Clement, A Downing, G Walley, I Phair, N Maffulli. Population based epidemiology of ankle sprains attending accident and emergency units in the West Midlands of England, and a survey of UK practice for severe ankle sprains Emergency Medicine Journal. 2003;20:508-510.
2. Nyska M, Mann G, editors. The unstable ankle. 1st ed. Leeds: Human Kinetics Europe Ltd; 2002.