

## Dealing with Ankle Sprains

Ankle sprains are one of the most common sports injuries in football. A sudden jolt or twist can overstretch and tear the supporting ligaments of the joint. Early treatment of a sprained ankle can help to speed recovery and minimize the symptoms.

### Symptoms

The symptoms of ankle sprain include:

- Swelling – the ankle can swell in minutes or over several hours.
- Pain in the ankle joint when trying to move it and when walking.



### Acute Management

Suggestions for immediate treatment of an ankle sprain include:

- Stop your activity.
- Rest the injured joint.
- Use icepacks every two hours, applied for 15 minutes.
- Bandage the joint firmly with an elasticized bandage.
- Raise the ankle above heart height whenever possible.
- Avoid exercise, heat, alcohol and massage in the first 48 hours, as these can all exacerbate swelling.

### Recurring ankle sprains

Some people suffer from recurring ankle sprains. This can be caused by a number of factors working in combination, including:

- Ligament scarring and excess looseness, as a result of previous ankle sprains
- Insufficient rehabilitation from previous sprains. This can lead to weak muscles surrounding the ankle joint. It can also cause decreased balance ability; this is called a proprioceptive deficit.

### Professional help

If you are unable to take any weight on the foot at all, seek medical attention immediately. An x-ray may be needed to see whether a bone is broken.

If the pain from a sprained ankle that you are managing yourself has not improved after a day or so, it is best to seek medical advice and consult with a physiotherapist or health care provider to get an accurate diagnosis of the injury and suggest the most appropriate treatment plan.

### Physiotherapy provides rehabilitation and support

Physiotherapy treatments may include:

- Hands on therapy for damaged tissues
- Exercise programs to improve mobility of the joint
- Exercises to strengthen the muscles surrounding the ankle
- Exercises to encourage balance training and improve the proprioceptive deficit which often is overlooked
- Advice on taping and ankle braces for use during activity

### **Preventing ankle sprains**

Suggestions to prevent ankle sprains include:

- Warm up prior to exercise
- Consider ankle braces or tape, as directed by your physiotherapist.
- Take care when exercising on uneven or wet ground, especially in the first few weeks after a sprain.
- Consult your physiotherapist for ankle strengthening exercises and exercises to improve your ankles proprioception.

---

If there are any further questions regarding this topic or areas of interest you would like covered in future editorials please contact either a Jubilee Sports Physiotherapy clinic or email [jubileesportsphysio@exemail.com.au](mailto:jubileesportsphysio@exemail.com.au).

This information is provided to Sutherland Shire Football Association by Jubilee Sports Physiotherapy as part of its commitment to Shire football and the SSFA.