

Family Medicine Clerkship Plain Language Summary Template

Title: Ankle Sprains

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Plain Language Summary:



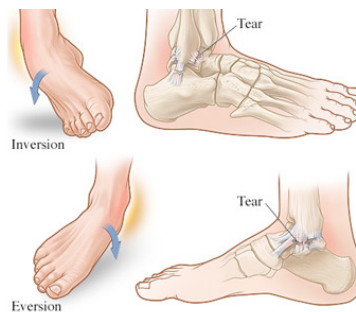
What is an ankle sprain?

The bones of the ankle are held together by structures called ligaments. They are elastic, similar to a rubber band, and allow us to move our ankles in all sorts of directions. The problem comes in when they are stretched too far, leading to a sprain. A sprain can be mild and only have a small amount of damage to the ligament, or it can be severe enough to where the ligament actually tears. When the ligament tears, it is called a Grade III Sprain.



How did I hurt my ankle in the first place?

There are many different ways to injure your ankle. The most common is inversion, or having your ankle roll inwards as shown in the first image below. The second is eversion, or having your ankle twist outwards. These can both lead to an ankle sprain or potentially even a broken bone.



What are the symptoms?

Your ankle will likely be painful to walk on and feel unstable. It may also hurt when you or your doctor touches it. It can become swollen and bruised.

How is a sprain diagnosed?

Typically, a sprain can be diagnosed by your doctor simply by him/her examining your ankle. Sometimes an x-ray, which is a picture of the bones in your ankle and foot, is necessary to rule out a broken bone. In rare cases, an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) is needed. This is another kind of camera that looks at the ligaments and muscles in your ankle.

How is it treated?

Treatment depends on the severity of the ankle sprain. Mild sprains (Grades I and II) will typically be treated with special exercises, ice, and sometimes a splint. Severe sprains (Grade III) may need a cast, long-term physical therapy, and possibly even surgery to fix the torn ligaments.

How can I prevent this from happening again?

The best way to prevent sprains is to maintain good strength and flexibility of the ankle:

- Warm up before exercising.
- Pay attention to the surface you are walking or running on (uneven surfaces can increase the risk of a sprain).
- Wear supportive shoes (running or tennis shoes).

I still have questions, where can I go for more information?

Medline Plus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003167.htm>

Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sprained-ankle/DS01014>

WebMD

<http://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/ankle-sprain-overview>

Key words:

Ankle sprain

Twisted ankle

Ankle injury

Ankle swelling

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