



Ankle Sprains

What is a sprain?

A sprain is a stretching or tearing of a ligament which hold joints together. These ligaments surround and protect the joints from having excessive or abnormal motion. When a ligament is injured, the joint no longer has the support which it needs. The resulting abnormal motion can cause injury to the cartilage on the bones or other supporting ligaments at that joint.

Ankle sprains

There are varying degrees of ankle sprains and they depend on which ligaments are affected. There are three main types of ankle sprains: lateral ankle sprains, medial ankle sprains, and high ankle sprains.

The first and most common is a lateral ankle sprain. The lateral ligaments attach the outside ankle bone to the outside of the foot and work to prevent the foot from turning underneath the ankle. They also hold the ankle bone deep within the joint to prevent it from moving forward or backward. These are the most commonly injured ligaments during a sprain. The tendons which support the lateral ankle are sometimes injured as well with this condition.

A medial ankle sprain is an injury to the ligament on the inside of the ankle. It can be very difficult to recover from as it is often associated with injury to the nearby tendons.

The third type of ankle sprain is a high ankle sprain.

This injury is common in athletes who wear high or mid-top shoes. This injury occurs when the ligaments which attach the leg bones together are stretched or torn. This injury is often misdiagnosed or goes undiagnosed at the initial evaluation by your doctor.

How are ankle sprains treated?

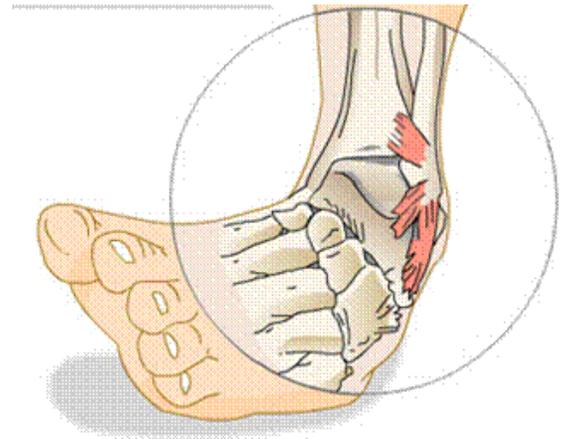
Ankle sprains are one of the most commonly under treated injuries in the US. Once the ligaments of the ankle have been injured one is much more likely to injure the ankle again. This is because our brain recognizes when the ligaments stretch too far. Once injured, the ligaments fail to send the signal to the brain and we are unable to react quickly enough to stabilize the joint and prevent re-injury.

Initial treatment of a sprain consists of R.I.C.E therapy (rest, ice, compression, elevation). Dr. Walimire usually immobilizes the joint with a fracture boot or brace for at least two weeks. Depending on the severity, he may require you to stay off the foot during that time. After two weeks of immobilization, a patient begins physical therapy. Sprains must be properly rehabilitated to avoid chronic instability and re-injury of the ankle. This rehabilitation is performed with strengthening and re-educating the ligaments and tendons which surround the joint.

When ankles are not properly rehabilitated they can become chronically unstable. When the joint has experienced abnormal motion for a long period of

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time, the cartilage can become worn and the joint can become scarred. In these cases, the joint must be repaired arthroscopically. Occasionally the ligament can be repaired from within the joint during this procedure, but the most common way to repair the ligament is to open the joint, shorten the ligament, and reattach it to the bone. If the joint damage is severe enough, the arthritis that forms is irreversible. In these cases the joint must be replaced or fused.



Ankle Sprain Exercises

