Inversion (Lateral) Ankle Sprain

WHAT IT IS
An ankle sprain is the stretching and possible tearing of the ligaments that hold the bones of the ankle together. The most common ligament injured is the anterior talofibular (ATF) ligament, followed by the calcaneofibular (CF) ligament. The severity of a sprain is graded on a scale of 1-3. A Grade 1 (mild) sprain involves slight stretching of the ligament; a Grade 2 (moderate) sprain involves a partial tear; and a Grade 3 (severe) sprain is a complete tear of the ligament.

HOW IT HAPPENS
An inversion ankle sprain is the most common type of ankle sprain and occurs when the foot is turned inward beyond ligamentous and muscular control. This often occurs in activities involving lateral movements, jumping, and running. Uneven ground or foot abnormalities may also increase the likelihood of this injury.

WHERE IT HURTS
Most of the pain will be localized on the lateral side of the ankle, more specifically, around the lateral malleolus, anterior talofibular (ATF) ligament and calcaneofibular (CF) ligament. Symptoms may include swelling, tenderness, pain, loss of motion, loss of function, and possibly instability of the joint.

IMMEDIATE TREATMENT
- **PROTECT** the ankle from further injury.
- **REST** the ankle from activities that cause pain or limping. Using crutches will allow the ankle to rest until you can walk without pain.
- **ICE** the ankle for 15-20 minutes to decrease pain and swelling. Ice may be applied as often as once per hour.
- **COMPRESSION** wraps can be used to decrease swelling throughout the day.
- **ELEVATE** the ankle above the level of the heart to decrease swelling.
- **IBUPROFEN** can help decrease both pain and swelling. Take NO MORE than 1200 mg per day, following the label’s recommended amounts.
### RANGE OF MOTION EXERCISES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ankle Pump</td>
<td>Point toe and pull back toward shin. Repeat 30 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towel Stretch</td>
<td>Loop towel around foot and pull back for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bent-Knee Towel Stretch</td>
<td>Loop towel around foot with knee bent. Pull back for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC’s</td>
<td>Pretend you are tracing the letters of the alphabet with your foot. Repeat alphabet twice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STRENGTHENING EXERCISES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exercise</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plantarflexion</td>
<td>Loop a resistance band around ball of foot and hold ends in hand. Point foot/toes down as far as possible like pressing on a gas pedal. Repeat 10-30 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorsiflexion</td>
<td>Loop the resistance band over the top of forefoot at the base of the toes. Pull foot/toes upward toward the lower leg, going as far as possible. Repeat 10-30 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inversion</td>
<td>Loop the resistance band over ball or instep of foot. Turn ankle inward towards other foot, going as far as possible. Repeat 10-30 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eversion</td>
<td>Loop the resistance band over outside edge of foot just below toes. Turn ankle outward or away from other foot as far as possible. Repeat 10-30 times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-Leg Balance</td>
<td>Attempt to balance on injured ankle without any support. Try to hold the single-leg position for at least 30 seconds. For more of a challenge, try this exercise with your eyes closed. Repeat 3 times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### RETURN TO ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

- Pain-free full range of motion
- Minimal or no swelling
- Full muscular control
- Continue strengthening and balance activities and consider taping or bracing the ankle to prevent future injuries

**Injury Prevention & Care - A Campus Recreation Program**

http://crec.unl.edu/ipcare

The content of this handout is provided as general information and may not apply to specific individuals or specific injuries. The information is not intended to replace the medical advice of a physician. Campus Recreation welcomes persons with all abilities. Please inquire about the availability of accommodations for special needs. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln is an equal opportunity educator and employer with a comprehensive plan for diversity.