

# Sprained ankle

A sprain occurs when one or more ligaments on the ankle joint are stretched or torn.

Ligaments are very resistant fibrous bands that connect bones to form a joint.

The most common ankle sprain affects ligaments on the outer side of the ankle.

Sprained ankle cause moderate to severe pain, swelling and difficulty when moving the ankle and walking.

## How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask questions about how the sprain happened and your symptoms. He or she will examine it and may order an x-ray if the diagnosis is not clear.

## How is it treated?

- Apply ice for 20 minutes every 3 or 4 hours. Do this for 2 or 3 days or until the pain goes away.



- Depending on the severity of the sprain, it will be bandaged in a different way to prevent the swelling from getting worse.
- Use crutches for as long as pain prevents you from standing on your foot.
- You can take an anti-inflammatory drug if your doctor prescribes one.
- Once you can walk again, do exercises to strengthen and improve your ankle's range of motion: move it up and down and around in circles. Walking along a sandy beach is very good.
- After it has healed, walk on tip-toes and heels for 5 minutes a day for a few days.
- On rare occasions ankle sprains cause a complete rupture of the ligaments and surgery is required.

## How long does it take to heal?

This depends on many factors (age, severity of the sprain and whether you have injured the same ankle before). A moderate sprain may take 2-4 weeks to recover, while a severe one may take 6 or more weeks.

## Can I prevent ankle sprains?

- Wear proper shoes that fit well when you exercise.
- Do stretching exercises before and after sports activities.
- Wear a bandage or brace for strenuous sports, especially if you have had a previous injury.