

Ankle Rehab



Bracing

Injured ligaments can take many weeks to heal. An ankle brace helps protect the ligaments not only during recovery but also when returning to sport or exercise activities. Wear your brace all day every day x 3 months. At the end of day remove brace and **before exercising** soak foot/ankle in warm/hot Epsom salts and water for 10 minutes. (1 tablespoon per quart of water.) Then start the exercises below. **After exercising** soak foot/ankle in ice water for 5 minutes. After 3 months if you can complete the balance test without pain the brace maybe worn as needed or for any activities.

Common misconceptions

- **Bracing can replace strengthening exercises - FALSE! Strong lower leg muscles help provide support to injured ligaments.**
- **Wearing a brace makes an ankle weaker - FALSE, if you continue your strengthening exercises. Plus, a brace can help improve your balance and thus prevent injury.**
- **Braces won't fit in shoes - FALSE! Professional and college athletes wear them all the time.**

Week 1-6

Range of Motion Exercises – Start immediately after removal of cast/boot or bandage.

Technique: Sit with your knee straight, pull your foot back, and hold the foot position for 10 seconds. Do 10 reps 3x a day for Pullback exercise and complete alphabet 3x per day for 6 weeks



Pullback

- Flex your foot back toward your body.

Alphabet

- Point your toes and write the entire alphabet using ankle motion.

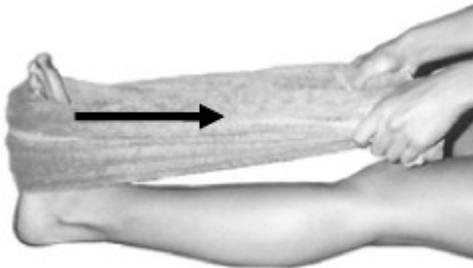
Week 2-3

Flexibility (Stretching) Exercises - Using a towel.

Loosen tight leg muscles. Tightness makes it hard to use stairs, walk, run, and jump.

Technique: Hold each exercise 10 seconds at a gentle stretch. **Do not bounce!**

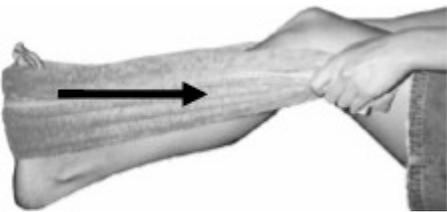
Frequency: 10 repetitions 2x per day for 2 weeks.



Calf Stretch

Basic: Sit with your knee straight and towel looped around the ball of your foot.

- Slowly pull back until you feel your upper calf stretch.



Heel Stretch

Basic: Sit with your knee slightly bent. Loop a towel around the ball of your foot.

- Slowly pull back until you feel a stretch in the lower calf and heel.

Week 3

Strengthening Exercises – From seated position.

Starts strengthening muscles which support ankle ligaments

Technique: Hold each exercise 10 seconds at a gentle stretch. **Do not bounce!**

Frequency: 10 repetitions 2x per day for 1 week.



Front of Shin

Basic - Push Out

- With your foot flat on the floor, push it outward against a wall, file cabinet or bookcase. Hold for three seconds.



Inner Shin

Basic - Push In

- With your foot flat on the floor, push it inward against your other foot. Hold for three seconds.



Front of Shin

Basic - Push Up

- Place the heel of your other foot on top of the injured one.
- Push down with the top heel while trying to push up with the injured foot. Hold for three seconds.

Week 4-6

Strengthening Exercises - Using Thera-Band

Frequency: 3 sets of 10 repetitions, 7 days per week for 3 weeks.



Front of Shin

Advanced - Band

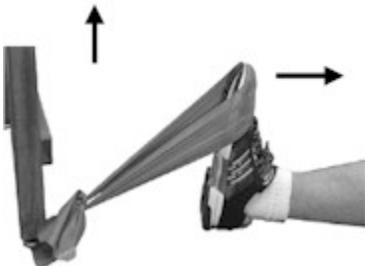
- Tie the band to a desk or dresser.
- Sit with your foot and knee in line and loop the band over the outside of your foot.
- Push your foot out against the band.



Inner Shin

Advanced - Band

- Tie the band to a desk or dresser.
- Sit with your foot and knee in line, and loop the band over the inside of your foot.
- Push your foot in against the band.



Front of Shin

Advanced - Band

- Tie the band to a desk or dresser.
- Sit with your leg straight and loop the band over the top of your foot.
- Slowly pull your foot back against the band.

Week 4-indefinitely



Calf Stretch

Advanced: Once you can stand, try stretching with your hands on a wall.

- Place the injured foot behind the other with your toes pointing forward.
- Keep your heels down and back leg straight.
- Slowly bend your front knee until you feel the calf stretch in the back leg.



Heel Stretch

Advanced: Once you can stand, try placing your injured foot behind the other with your toes pointing forward.

- Keeping your heels down, slowly bend your back knee until you feel a heel stretch in the back leg.

Balance

An ankle sprain can decrease your ability to balance on that foot and makes it easier to roll the ankle again. As soon as you can stand without pain, usually about week 3 of rehab, try the balance tests below.

Technique: Starting with level 1 -Balance on your injured foot for 10-30 seconds, do 3 repetitions per day. If you can't balance for ten seconds without wobbling, practice that level every day until you can. When you can stand 60 seconds without wobbling or losing your balance, then move to the next level.



Level 1 - Arms out to your side, eyes open

Level 2 - Arms across your chest, eyes open

Level 3 - Arms out to your side, eyes closed

Level 4 - Arms across your chest, eyes closed

When you pass the Level 4 test decrease ankle exercises/strengthening to 3x per week and stop soaks and icing.

If you have difficulty completing these exercises or balance tests after 3 weeks physical therapy maybe helpful.

If after 6 weeks you are still having pain and cannot complete the balance test you should be re-evaluated by your physician.

To Prevent Re-injury

- Continue daily calf and heel stretching, especially before activity (indefinitely)
- Continue ankle strengthening 3 days per week (indefinitely)
- Wear an ankle brace during strenuous activity (indefinitely)
- **Strong leg muscles help the ligaments hold the ankle together.**