

## Ankle Sprains

### Overview

Ligaments are fibrous, elastic bands of tissue that connect and stabilize the bones. An ankle sprain is a common, painful injury that occurs when one or more of the ankle ligaments is stretched beyond the normal range of motion. Sprains can occur as a result of sudden twisting, turning or rolling movements.

### Lateral Inversion Sprains

Ankle sprains are categorized by the type of motion that causes the injury. The most common type, called a lateral inversion sprain, occurs when the foot rolls inward. This causes injury to the ligaments on the outer side of the ankle, especially the anterior talofibular ligament.

### Medial Eversion Sprains

A second type of sprain, called a medial eversion sprain, occurs when the foot rolls outward. This type of sprain causes injury to the ligaments on the inner side of the ankle.

### Syndesmosis (High Ankle) Sprains

The least common type of sprain is called a syndesmosis (or "high ankle") sprain. This type of sprain occurs when the foot rolls outward and the leg turns inward.

### Symptoms

Symptoms of an ankle sprain vary depend on the degree of ligament damage. Sprains are ranked in three degrees. A first degree sprain is a slight stretching of one or more ligaments. This results in mild tenderness. A second degree sprain is a partial tearing that results in moderate tenderness and swelling. The ankle may have some instability. A third degree sprain, the most severe, is a complete ligament tear. This results in severe pain, swelling and ankle instability.

### Treatment

Treatment for an ankle sprain depends on the severity of the injury. Treatment usually begins with rest, ice, compression and elevation. A first degree sprain typically requires a bandage wrap. A second degree sprain may require an ankle brace. A third degree sprain may require a cast or walking boot. As the ankle heals, all patients typically benefit from rehabilitation exercises. Surgery is not usually needed.

