

TOCA Tips: Ankle Sprains

Ankle sprains are very common in athletes and occur when there is a traumatic injury to the ligaments surrounding the ankle joint. Ankle sprains occur when an abnormal force is applied to the foot. Commonly, this happens while running or jumping on an uneven surface. The foot rolls in (inversion) or out (eversion) and the ligaments are stretched or torn, depending on the severity. Occasionally a pop is heard at the time of the sprain, followed by pain and swelling of the ankle.

Initial treatment for ankle sprains consists of the [R.I.C.E.](#) treatment plan (Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation). Limit weight bearing with severe sprains early in treatment. Ice should be used for 20 minutes each hour, being careful not to put it directly on your skin as to avoid frostbite. Wrap the ankle in an ACE bandage or compression stocking to minimize swelling. Lace up ankle braces can give added support. Raise the ankle above the heart to minimize swelling. A NSAID can be helpful to reduce pain and inflammation. Early mobilization and physical therapy have been proven to decrease the time to return to sporting activities.

If you are unable to bear weight or have direct tenderness over the bone, seek medical treatment immediately to rule out a fracture.