



# Ankle Sprain Discharge Instructions

The instructions in this pamphlet will help you recover after an ankle sprain. If your ankle injury is severe, your physician may recommend further treatment that is not described here. Most people with an ankle sprain are able to walk normally within 10–14 days of the injury. Follow the instructions given to you in the emergency department including any recommended pain medications.

**For the first 48 hours**, the most important steps to recovery are summarized as “**POLICE**”: protection, optimal loading, ice, compression and elevation.

## Protection

- Use a walking aid (like crutches) if you are not able to put weight on your ankle at first.

## Optimal loading

- Return to a normal “heel-toe” pattern of walking as soon as you can tolerate: your heel should contact the floor first, then roll your weight forward to push off from your toe.
- Gradually add more weight through your injured ankle. Take short walks often throughout the day rather than one long walk. If you need to sit or lie down, make sure you try to get up as often as you can.



## Ice

- Before using ice, make sure you have feeling in the skin around your ankle.
- Place ice packs on your ankle with a towel between your skin and the ice. Apply ice for the first 48 hours or anytime it feels more swollen or painful. Use only 15 minutes at a time. Monitor your skin for redness and changes in feeling.

## Compression

- If suggested by your doctor or physiotherapist, or if you feel it helps, wrap your ankle in a tensor, sleeve or brace.
- Avoid sleeping with the tensor on.

## Elevation

- Elevate your ankle above your heart in the first two days or if the swelling increases after activity.
- While elevated, pump your ankle up and down. This can help increase the blood flow and decrease the swelling in your leg.

## See a physiotherapist

- It is strongly recommended to see a physiotherapist as soon as you are able.
- To find a physiotherapist near you, go to: <http://bcphysio.org/find-a-physio>.

## Daily Recovery Exercises

Begin the following exercises as soon as you are able. They will prevent future sprains, long-term ankle pain and arthritis. Do them **at least 3 times a day**. It is normal to feel some discomfort during these exercises, but your symptoms should not get worse. If you aren't sure how to perform these exercises, review them with your health care provider.

### Ankle circles

- Move ankle in large circles. Do for 1 minute in each direction.



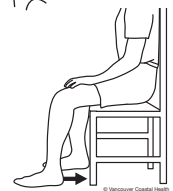
### Ankle alphabet

- Write out the alphabet with your toes, making the letters as large as you can.



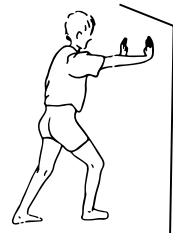
### Ankle slides

- Sit and slowly slide injured ankle and foot back until you feel a stretch. Keep your heel on the ground.
- Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.



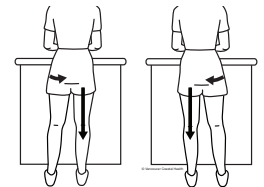
### Standing calf stretches

- Stand with sprained ankle at the back, toes pointed forward, heel flat. Keep back knee straight and forward knee bent. Lean forward until feel stretch in calf.
- Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.
- Next, hold same position but bend the back knee until feel stretch in lower calf.
- Hold 30 seconds, repeat 3 times.



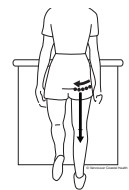
### Balance: Weight-shift in standing

- Hold a counter for balance. Gently squeeze buttock muscles. Slowly shift weight to injured side, then shift weight back to other side. Repeat 10 times.



### Balance: Stand on one leg (try when weight-shift is easy)

- Stand in front of a stable surface. Gently squeeze buttock muscles. Lift one foot off the ground.
- Hold for 10 seconds, repeat 10 times.



## When to see your family doctor

- Questions or need for more medication
- If your pain or swelling has not improved after two weeks

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