

## **Ankle Injuries**

**A sprained ankle can happen to anyone and it can be from something as simple as just putting a foot wrong while walking. Anyone who has suffered a sprain can tell you that it is surprisingly painful and can put you out of action for a long time.**

A simple, uncomplicated sprain will involve tearing of the ligament fibres on either side of the ankle joint. Smaller injuries will involve only a few of these fibres and heal easily but in severe cases there can even be a complete rupture of the ligament. The most serious sprains will actually result in a fracture of the nearby bones and any severe ankle sprain should be screened to ensure no fracture exists.

Because this is such a common injury, many of us just let nature take its course without seeking medical attention. While it's true that our bodies are great natural healers, many people report ongoing problems well after the injury has healed. Common complaints include continued pain, loss of movement and balance and repeated injury of the same ankle. There are a few reasons for this, which can be addressed with an appropriate rehabilitation program.

For instance, while we rest our injury and wait for it to heal, it doesn't take long for the surrounding muscles lose strength, shorten and the joint stiffens, even just a little. If the swelling that occurs following an injury is not well managed, small adhesions can form contributing to this joint stiffness.

On the other hand, the torn ligaments may heal but with less stability than before. This means that the muscles that control the joint have to work harder to keep the same level of balance and normal movement. A joint that doesn't move normally is quite often a source of pain and potentially even osteoarthritis later on.

Proprioception, or your ability to sense what position your ankle is in without looking is another important part of balance, helping you to make sure your foot is in the right position before putting all of your weight onto it. Often after an injury proprioception is reduced and greatly adds to the risk of spraining the ankle again. Weakness of the muscles surrounding the ankle only exacerbate the problem, leading to a chronically painful ankle.

Your Physiotherapist can help with a program focused on restoring any lost movement, strengthening weakened muscles and improving proprioception. It doesn't matter how long ago your injury was, a program can be tailored for you, which will help the function of your ankle and most of all prevent any further injury.