

# Fisher-Titus Medical Center

# SPORTS INJURY GUIDELINES

*“The Winning Team for Your Athletic Health Care Needs”*

## Ankle Sprains

### What is an ankle sprain?

A sprain is a stretch injury of the ligaments that support the ankle. About 25,000 ankle sprains occur in the United States every day. The ligaments on the outside of the ankle are the most commonly injured when the foot is turned inward (inverted).

### Grades of Sprains

**Grade 1:** Slight stretching and some damage to the fibers of the ligament

**Grade 2:** Partial tearing of the ligament. If the ankle joint is examined and moved in certain ways, abnormal looseness (laxity) occurs.

**Grade 3:** Complete tear of the ligament. If the ankle is pulled or pushed in certain movements, gross instability occurs.

### Diagnosis

See your doctor to diagnose a sprained ankle. X-rays may be ordered to rule out a broken bone in the ankle or foot. The doctor may order an MRI scan if they suspect a severe injury to the ligaments, joint surface, a small bone chip or other problem. The MRI may be ordered after the swelling resolves.

### What should I do if I sprain my ankle?

The first 24-48 hours use R.I.C.E.

**Rest** your ankle by not walking on it.

**Ice** should be immediately applied. It keeps the swelling down. Use 20 to 30 minutes, three to four times daily.

**Compression** bandages or ace-wraps to immobilize and support the injured ankle.

**Elevate** your ankle above the heart level for 48 hours.



## How should I rehabilitate my ankle?

### 1. Restore motion and flexibility.

Gently move ankle up and down while turning the heel in and out. Restore flexibility to the calf muscles.

### 2. Restore strength.

Use a rubber tube for resistance, fix one end of the tube to an immovable object and loop other end around the forefoot.

### 3. Restore balance.

Practice doing one legged exercises with uninjured ankle in the air.

### When can I return to sports?

1. You have full range of motion in all directions.
2. You have near-normal strength in all the muscles around the ankle
3. You have good balance
4. You have no pain or swelling with activity

### Should I use a brace when I play sports?

Taping the ankle or using a brace for support can help prevent re-injury. Select a brace that gives you the best support for the sport you want to do.

Remember, a brace helps support strong muscles, but should never be used as a substitute for a strengthening program. Continue to do strengthening exercises as you return to sports.