

Lateral Ankle Ligament Tear or ‘Sprained Ankle’

What is It?

It is a tear, damage or disruption of the ligaments on the outside of the ankle that connect the lower leg to the foot.

What Causes this?

It is usually due to an ‘inversion sprain’ or as the result of the ankle being forced violently inwards. For example, tripping on a kerb or falling down a pothole. Weakness and poor co-ordination of the nerves and muscles that control ankle stability may increase susceptibility to this injury.

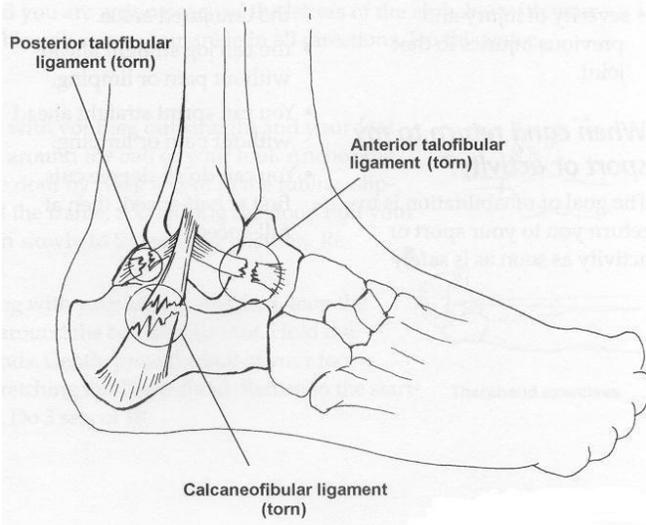
What are the signs & symptoms?

Main Symptoms - Pain on the outside of the ankle and foot. Swelling and bruising may develop within the next 24 to 48 hours, which may be quite severe. Bruising may appear around the outside and inside of the foot. There may be pain on weight-bearing or walking and pain may also be present on pointing toes inwards or twisting the foot. There may be tenderness to touch around the bone on the outside of the ankle and possibly on the outside of the lower leg or calf.

Other possible symptoms – There may be pain and tenderness on the inner aspect of the ankle.



Ankle Sprain



What will physiotherapy consist of?

If left untreated injuries to the lateral ligament complex can result in functional instability of the ankle in daily activities, such as walking, work and sport. Physiotherapy may include:

Massage encompasses a variety of techniques and is given with sufficient pressure through the superficial tissue to reach the deep lying structures. It is used to increase blood flow, decrease swelling, reduce muscle spasm and promote normal tissue repair.

Deep friction is an aggressive massage technique. It is applied across the tissue fibres. Pressure is given as deeply as possible. This technique is initially painful but can cause a numbing effect. It can be used to break down scar tissue, restore normal movement and prepare the injured structure for mobilisation or manipulation.

Mobilisation is a manual technique where the joint and soft tissues are gently moved by the physiotherapist to restore normal range, lubricate joint surfaces, and relieve pain.

Ultrasonic Therapy transmits sound waves through the tissues stimulating the body's chemical reactions and therefore healing process, just as shaking a test tube in the laboratory speeds up a chemical reaction. It reduces tissue spasm, accelerates the healing process and results in pain relief.

Interferential Therapy introduces a small electrical current into the tissues and can be used at varying frequencies for differing treatment effects. E.g. pain relief, muscle or nerve stimulation, promoting blood flow and reducing swelling/inflammation.

Other treatments that may be used

Laser Therapy emits beams of light into the tissues of the body, stimulating chemical reactions and having a similar effect to ultrasound though using light energy instead of sound energy.

Acupuncture is an oriental technique of introducing needles into the skin to increase or decrease energy flow to promote pain relief and healing.

Injection Therapy is a specialist procedure, which needs the consent of your G.P. A non-harmful steroid and local anaesthetic are injected directly into the injured structure. It has a dramatic effect on removing inflammation and promoting healing.

Taping/Strapping may be used if thought necessary to restrict abnormal movement and prevent further damage.

Podiatry an analysis of the foot mechanics and structure during walking or running and correction as appropriate.

What should the patient do to help their condition?

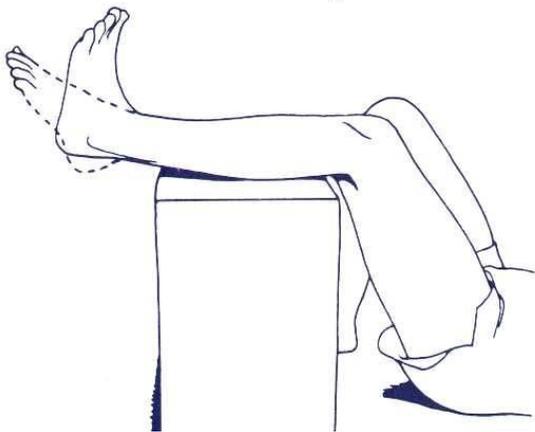
Active Rest – keep active but avoid activities that aggravate your condition i.e. any activity that may put a twisting or sideways strain on the ankle.

Apply an ice pack - for a maximum of 20 minutes. A bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp cloth works well because it moulds to the shape of the ankle. Ensure that the skin does not change colour (the sign of an ice burn).

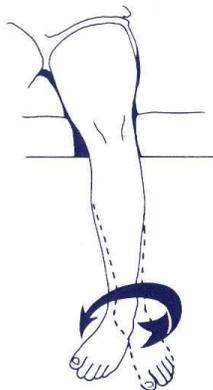
Contrast bathing - From 5 days post injury put the foot into a bucket of water as hot as you can withstand for 5 minutes followed by one with water as cold as you can withstand for 5 minutes repeat for approximately 20 – 30 minutes.

Take ibuprofen/ analgesia - according to the directions on the packet, up to the maximum daily dose. It is not suitable for people who have a history of stomach ulcers, or for some people with asthma. If in doubt, ask your pharmacist for advice.

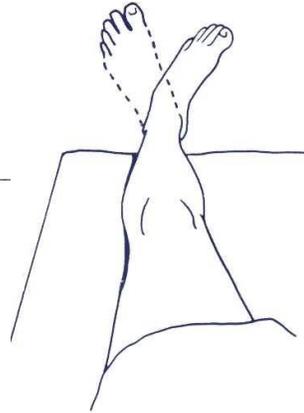
Exercise/Postural programme – comply with the prescribed exercise/postural programme. **Your physio will instruct you as to which of the exercises to begin with, when to add the others, as well as how to progress the exercises.**



1. Foot pump up + down



2. Foot Circling



3. Foot pump in + out

Exercises 1-3

Pump the foot in the 4 differing directions for approximately 30 seconds

(begin with exercise 1 only and progress to others when instructed)

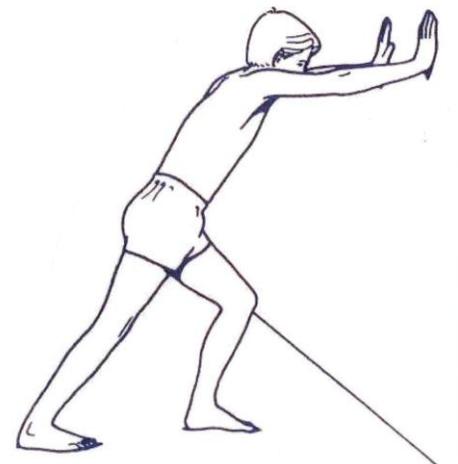
Do 10 repetitions and at least three times daily

Exercises 4-7

Stretch slowly into the desired direction and then hold for approximately 30 seconds, during this period the stretch should ease and you should keep going further into the stretch without jarring or bouncing.



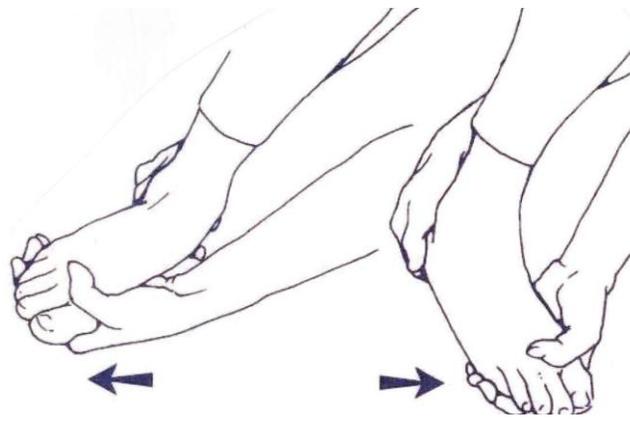
4. Soleus Stretch



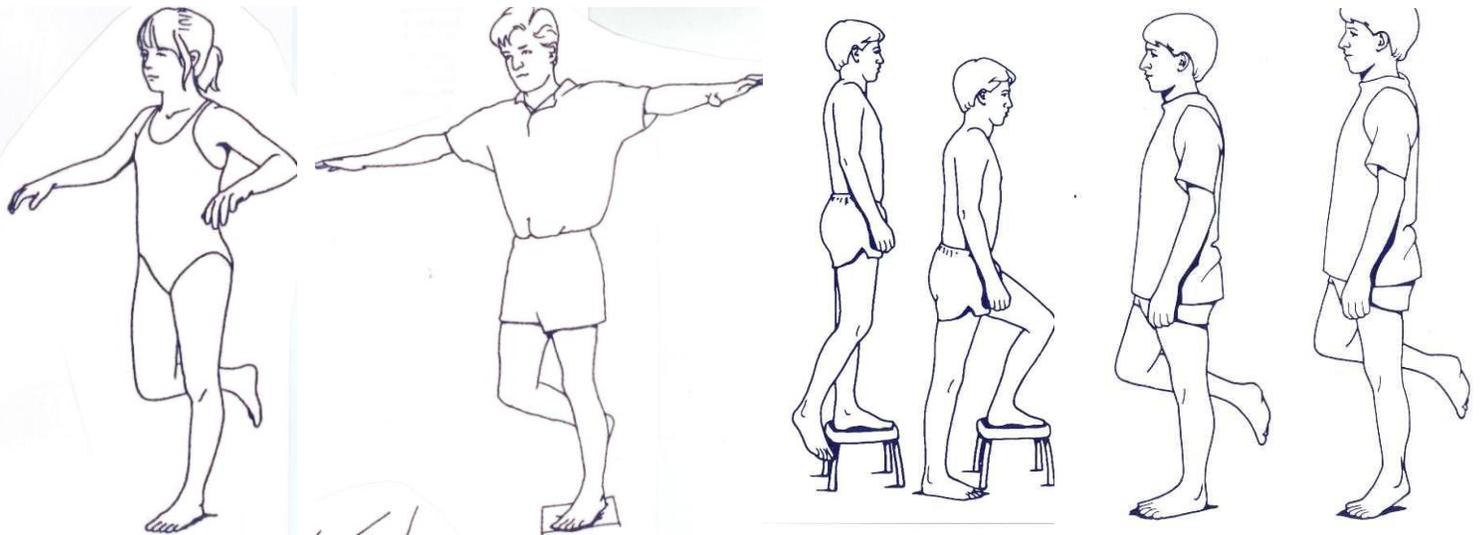
5. Gastrocnemius stretch



6. Plantarflexion stretch



7. Inversion and Eversion Stretch



8. Balancing – Stand on one foot and try to balance for one minute. When able to do this try with the eyes closed, then on uneven surfaces and then going onto toes - Do 2-3 times daily

9. Step ups- slowly step up onto a step ensuring you fully straighten the knee do 2-3 times daily

10. Calf raises – Rise up onto the ball of the foot as high as possible and hold for two seconds. Repeat 10 -15 times and do 2-3 times daily. You may also progress to doing this over the edge of a step.

What if physiotherapy does not help or resolve my condition? It is very rare that physiotherapy does not resolve this condition, in these cases a cortisone injection may be appropriate and in very extreme cases surgery is a possible option. These options can be discussed with your therapist if appropriate