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# INJURY MANAGEMENT SERIES FOR ATHLETES

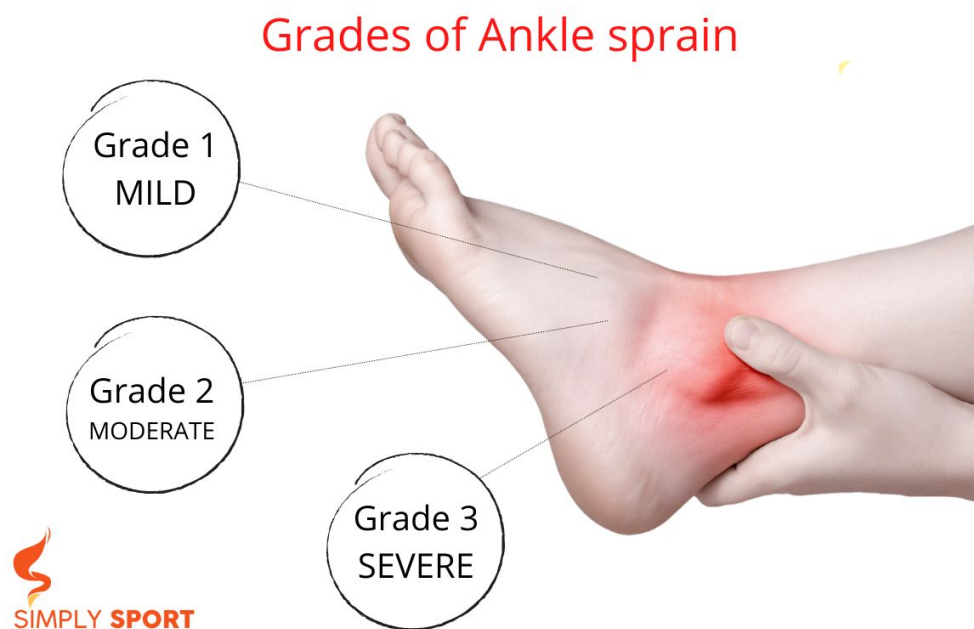
## ALL THAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ANKLE SPRAIN

Ankle sprain is one of the most common injuries from which the athletes suffer. The injury typically happens when you accidentally twist or turn your ankle in an awkward way. This can stretch or tear the ligaments that hold your ankle bones and joints together. Athletes that play a sport which demands jumping, cutting action, rolling, twisting of the foot or quick change in direction of the foot, are most vulnerable to it. Common examples of ankle sprain are when a Lawn Tennis player gets the wrong foot on court, football player missing a step over or Basketball player landing on a foot of another player after jumping for rebound.

### Grades of Ankle sprain

The ankle sprain is divided into different grades based on its severity.

- **Grade 1 (Mild):**
  - Your ligaments are stretched but not torn
  - Your ankle still feels stable
  - You may have some pain and stiffness
- **Grade 2 (Moderate):**
  - One or more ligaments are partially torn
  - The joint isn't totally stable, and you can't move it as much as usual
  - You have swelling and moderate pain
- **Grade 3 (Severe):**
  - One or more ligaments are totally torn, and your ankle is unstable
  - You have a lot of pain and can't move it



## Signs and Symptoms of Ankle Sprain

The inflammation that comes along with a sprained ankle can cause symptoms including:

- **Swelling and bruising.** It may be so swollen that you can press on the area with your finger and leave an indent.
- **Pain.** Your nerves are more sensitive after a sprain. The joint hurts and may throb. It's often worse when you press on it, move your foot in certain ways, walk, or stand.
- **Redness and warmth.** A sprain causes more blood to flow to the area.
- **Instability.** The joint can feel weak when the ligament is totally torn.
- **Trouble walking.** A sprain may limit how much you can move your ankle.

## Treatment

For self-care of an ankle sprain, use the R.I.C.E. approach for the first two or three days:

- **Rest** - Avoid activities that cause pain, swelling or discomfort.

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- **Ice** - Use an ice pack or ice slush bath immediately for 15 to 20 minutes and repeat every two to three hours while you're awake. If you have vascular disease, diabetes or decreased sensation, talk with your doctor before applying ice.
  - **Compression** - To help stop swelling, compress the ankle with an elastic bandage until the swelling stops. Don't hinder circulation by wrapping too tightly. Begin wrapping at the end farthest from your heart.
  - **Elevation** - To reduce swelling, elevate your ankle above the level of your heart, especially at night. Gravity helps reduce swelling by draining excess fluid.

## ROM (Range Of Motion) exercises

**Ankle Rotations** – Best done seated with one leg completely extended and slightly elevated, either on a foam roller or a pillow, focus on making circles with your toes. Start slowly, alternating between one clockwise rotation and one anti – clockwise rotation. Continue for one minute before moving onto the other leg.

**Plantarflexion/Dorsiflexion** – Focus on pointing your toes away from your body and hold for a count of 10. Once that is done, move towards the opposite direction, that is, try to point your toes towards your face and hold for a count of 10. Repeat the process for about 2 minutes.

**Calf Raises** – Stand at the edge of a platform and try to point your toes down, almost like you're trying to make yourself look taller by standing on your toes. Hold at the top for about 2-3 seconds before coming back to the normal position. Try to do about 20 reps in one set. After a break of about a minute, repeat one more time.

## Proprioceptive / Balance Training

**Single Leg Balance** – Try to balance yourself on one leg, and progressively increase the time for successful balance. Start with 20 seconds and try to work up to 1 full minute.

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**Single Leg Balance with Eyes Shut** – This is a progression from the first exercise. It further challenges you by taking the visual stimulus out of the equation. Once again, start with keeping balance on one leg for 20 seconds with your eyes closed and work upto 1 full minute.

**Bracing / Taping** – Ankle braces are a piece of equipment to improve awareness of the ankle joint and prevent the ankles from recurring injuries. Ankle braces have been shown to reduce the incidence of ankle injuries in athletes.

Another way to reduce the chances of ankle injuries is to wear high top ankle shoes along with taping the ankle. However, this method cannot be self applied and requires an experienced person to do the taping.

## Injury prevention

- Stretch before and after you exercise
- Do special exercises that strengthen the muscles around your ankle – Particularly the ones focusing on Inversion and Eversion with the help of a resistance band
- Do special exercises to improve your balance
- If you have had ankle problems before, ask your doctor about taping your ankle or wearing an ankle brace

### About the Author

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