



University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center

INSTRUCTION SHEET: ANKLE INJURY, MILD Treatment: Soft Wrap

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed an ankle injury, most likely a mild sprain. A sprain is a stretching or tear in the ligaments and tendons (rope-like bands holding bones and muscles in place) of a joint. No severe sprain, significant fracture (break) or dislocation is apparent.

Nevertheless, even a mild sprain is a significant injury, and should be treated, not ignored. Also, a hidden break could still be present; proper initial treatment of a sprain also treats a hidden hairline fracture. **However, if your symptoms persist, repeat evaluation is necessary.**

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR ANKLE INJURY:

1. Above all, put the ankle to rest! Resting the ankle not only decreases pain, it also helps heal the ankle more quickly. Minimize walking and standing on the injured leg for at least two days, then gradually ease back into normal walking.
2. A soft wrap/splint helps support the ankle and minimize swelling. If the wrap/splint feels too tight, loosen it.
3. Elevating the ankle is helpful to reduce swelling, especially in the initial two days after injury. Keep the ankle up on pillows, above the level of the heart. Let gravity work to decrease swelling.
4. Apply cold to the ankle off-and-on for the first two days after injury. Cold helps ease discomfort and minimize swelling. Do not apply ice directly to the ankle, causing discomfort. Rather, aim for coolness, yet comfort, applying a layer or two of cloth between the cold pack and ankle.
5. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with a sprained ankle. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
6. After two days, apply heat in the form of warm soaks. Moist heat increases circulation in the ankle tissues, promoting healing.
7. If you are not showing good, steady improvement over the next three to four days, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor. Repeat examination is indicated; X-rays may be necessary.
8. If you are having severe pain or an unusual problem, return to the Student Health Center or see your personal/referral doctor *promptly*.
9. Realize that once an ankle is sprained, it will be prone to further sprains. High-top shoes or a proper ankle wrap can help protect the ankle during future sports activities. Remember, though, allow *at least* two weeks for the ankle to heal before you attempt any sports (longer if the activity causes any ankle discomfort).