

FOOTPRINTS

An Informational Newsletter for Patients of APMA Member Podiatrists

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Ankle injuries are a common occurrence among athletes at every level. If not properly treated, an acute injury can become a chronic condition with ongoing pain and weakness, making you susceptible to repeat injuries and derailing your activities. Footprints caught up with two APMA member podiatrists who specialize in sports medicine to find out more about what to do if you experience an ankle injury.

DIAGNOSIS

Ankle injuries differ in type and severity. When you hurt your ankle, it's important to identify whether the injury is to the soft tissue (muscles, tendons, and ligaments) or the bone.

Any injury that lasts more than four or five days is a serious one and needs medical attention, said Howard Osterman, DPM, a podiatrist for the Washington Wizards. "If the ankle is stiff in the morning or after periods of sitting on the couch, that may be a soft tissue injury. If you have experienced an injury, and it causes constant pain even after elevation, or the swelling has gone down but you can't walk, it may be a bone injury," Dr. Osterman said.

The risk of re-injury is high without appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

Your podiatrist may order imaging studies including X-rays or MRIs to ensure a proper diagnosis of the injury. Even if the injury is a sprain (an injury of the soft tissue), it may still require professional care.

"The more swelling and bruising and less ability to put weight on [the ankle] after a sprain, the more concerning it may be. Athletes typically develop high ankle sprains, which are more difficult and require professional care from a podiatrist," said Patrick DeHeer, DPM, a podiatrist with the Indiana Pacers.

BOTTOM LINE: If pain from an ankle injury does not resolve quickly with rest, ice, compression, and elevation, see a podiatrist to properly diagnose your injury.

PREVENTION

To prevent ankle injuries, it's important to wear proper, supportive footwear for whatever sport or physical activity you are playing in. "Too many times, ankle injuries occur when someone is doing an activity in a shoe that's not appropriate for that activity, like wearing flip-flops while hiking or running shoes while playing basketball," Dr. Osterman said.

Strengthening exercises can help stabilize your ankle joint, making it less susceptible to injury. These exercises help stretch the peroneal tendon, which prevents the ankle from turning in:



CALF RAISES
Improve strength



ACHILLES TENDON STRETCHES
Enhance flexibility



ONE-LEGGED STAND
Promote proprioception/
nerve rehabilitation



STABILITY TRAINING ON A BOSU BALL
Improve core strength

To learn more about these stretches and how to perform them, visit www.apma.org/stretches.

"If you're an athlete with a history of ankle sprains, it's important to get an ankle support so you don't re-injure yourself," Dr. Osterman said. "Please see a podiatrist for an evaluation to make sure you have a brace that fits appropriately to provide stability for what you have injured."

TREATMENT

Once your podiatrist has diagnosed your injury, they will work with you to define an individualized treatment plan. The type of treatment your doctor recommends will vary based on your injury, activities, and lifestyle.

"Podiatrists provide a comprehensive approach to sports injuries from medical management, to biomechanical therapies, to rehabilitative care, and surgical treatment when indicated," Dr. DeHeer said.

If you experience ongoing pain or discomfort from any sports-related foot or ankle injury, make an appointment with an APMA member podiatrist. "Whether you're a weekend warrior or a professional athlete, podiatrists are an integral part of your sports medicine team," said Dr. DeHeer.

Visit www.apma.org/KeepAmericaActive for more information.



Patrick DeHeer, DPM, practices in Indianapolis and is the current team podiatrist for the Indiana Pacers. All quotes and content were used with his permission.



Howard Osterman, DPM, practices in Washington, DC, and is the current team podiatrist for the Washington Wizards. All quotes and content were used with his permission.