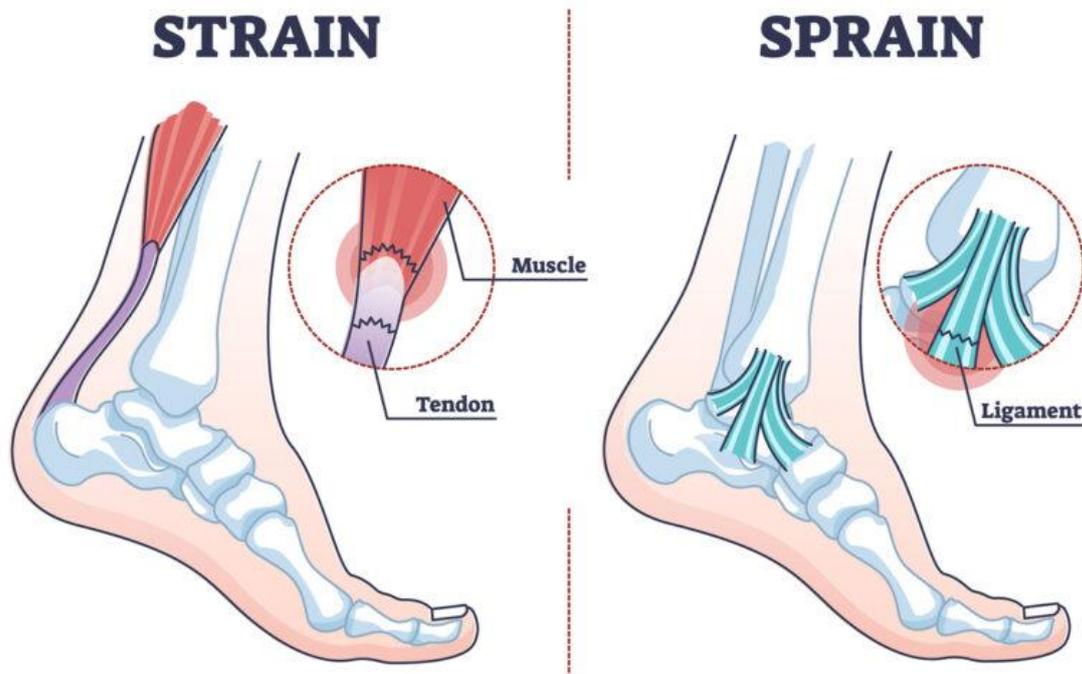


Ankle Sprain and Strain



What is an ankle sprain or strain?

An ankle **sprain** happens when the ligaments (strong bands of tissue that support the joint) are stretched or torn. An ankle **strain** affects the muscles or tendons around the ankle.

These injuries are common and often occur after a twist, fall, or sudden change in direction.

Common causes

- Twisting the ankle when walking or running
 - Sports such as football, basketball, or running
 - Uneven ground or stairs
 - Wearing unsupportive footwear
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Symptoms

- Pain around the ankle
- Swelling and tenderness
- Bruising
- Stiffness or reduced movement
- Difficulty putting weight through the foot
- A feeling that the ankle may “give way”

Symptoms can range from mild to severe depending on the degree of injury.

How is it diagnosed?

A healthcare professional will usually diagnose an ankle sprain or strain based on:

- Your symptoms and how the injury happened
- Physical examination of the ankle

An X-ray may be arranged if there is concern about a fracture.

Early management (First 48–72 hours)

Use the **PRICE** principles:

P – Protect

Avoid activities that increase pain. Use supportive footwear or a brace if advised.

R – Rest

Reduce activity, but gentle movement is encouraged as pain allows.

I – Ice

Apply ice for 15–20 minutes, 2–3 times a day. Wrap ice in a cloth to protect the skin.

C – Compression

Use a compression bandage to help control swelling (not too tight).

E – Elevation

Keep the ankle raised above hip level when resting.

Pain relief such as paracetamol or anti-inflammatory medication may help (if suitable for you).

Rehabilitation and recovery

Early movement and exercise help recovery and prevent stiffness.

Gentle exercises (as pain allows)

- Ankle circles
- Pointing toes up and down
- Alphabet exercise with your foot

As symptoms improve, progress to:

- Strengthening exercises
- Balance and control exercises
- Gradual return to walking, then sport

A physiotherapist can guide a personalised exercise programme.

How long will recovery take?

- **Mild sprain/strain:** 1–3 weeks
- **Moderate injury:** 4–6 weeks
- **Severe injury:** 8–12 weeks or longer

Recovery times vary depending on severity and adherence to exercises.

When can I return to activity or sport?

You should be able to:

- Walk without pain or limping
- Move the ankle fully
- Perform balance and hopping activities without pain

Returning too early increases the risk of re-injury.

STEPS to a Faster Ankle Sprain Recovery



- 1 PROTECTION:**
 - Shield your ankle from further harm.
 - Avoid activities that worsen the injury.
 - Keep your ankle elevated to reduce swelling.
- 2 REST:**
 - Give your ankle time to heal.
 - Limit movement and weight-bearing activities.
 - Consult your doctor about rest duration.
- 3 ICE:**
 - Reduce pain and swelling.
 - Apply ice packs for 15-20 minutes every 2-3 hours.
 - Wrap ice pack in a cloth to protect skin.
- 4 COMPRESSION:**
 - Stabilize your ankle and control swelling.
 - Wrap your ankle with an elastic bandage.
 - Ensure the bandage is snug but not too tight.
- 5 ELEVATION:**
 - Decrease swelling and improve circulation.
 - Keep your ankle above heart level when resting.
 - Use pillows to elevate your ankle.

When should I seek further medical advice?

Contact a healthcare professional if:

- Pain or swelling is worsening after a few days
 - You cannot put weight on the ankle
 - There is significant bruising or deformity
 - Symptoms are not improving after 2–3 weeks
 - You experience repeated ankle sprains
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Preventing future ankle injuries

- Warm up before exercise
 - Maintain ankle strength and balance
 - Wear supportive footwear
 - Consider ankle supports during sport if advised
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Key message

Most ankle sprains and strains recover well with early movement, appropriate exercises, and gradual return to activity. Staying active within comfort helps speed recovery.

If you have concerns, speak to your GP, physiotherapist, or healthcare provider.