

Are You At Risk For

Ankle Sprain?

Ankle sprains are one of the most common injuries sustained during sports, accounting for approximately 10-30% of single injuries. The occurrence has significantly increased over the last few decades, resulting in over 1 million ankle sprain-related health care visits per year. Because more people are working out for their overall health and the number of children participating in sports has increased, we're seeing an upswing in this type of injury.

Anyone can be at risk for ankle sprains due to accidents beyond their control. But those of you who participate in sports or regular exercise routines increase your risks even more. Fortunately there are ways to decrease the risk factors for potential ankle sprain.

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First, enhance your postural stability with range of motion and strength training exercises for the tendons and ligaments surrounding the ankle joint area. Consider bracing your ankle if you have very flexible ankle joint ligaments or have had a previous sprain. Certain types of feet will also benefit from taping and bracing prior to physical activities to reduce the potential for ankle sprains.

Foot posture is important in determining the amount of stress placed on the ankle joint area. Custom orthotic appliances can be used to control abnormal mechanics of the feet, thereby decreasing the stress on that area. Professional computerized gait scanning can analyze the force vectors passing through the foot into the ankle joint area and higher and an orthotic can be designed to help diminish the impacts.

Active individuals should note other factors that may increase your risk for ankle injury. Persons who are overweight or have high body mass index (BMI) should start slowly, as these issues produce increased pressure on your lower joints, particularly your feet and ankles. Playing sports that involve sustained running and jumping movements, such as soccer, lacrosse, basketball and volleyball will create more opportunities to incur injury. And other factors, such as footwear, the type of playing surface, and personal skill level are all variables that should be considered, since they can contribute to your risk of sprains at the ankle joint.

If you do experience an ankle sprain have it treated promptly. Ankle sprains damage the ligaments, which maintain the stability of the ankle joint and if a sprain is not treated properly, the initial inflammatory response post-injury can lead to scar tissue. This is more likely to cause future problems due to a reduction in energy absorbing capacity during activity, which can create functional limitations.

If ankle sprains become repetitive, they can lead to chronic instability resulting in osseous (bone tissue) problems at the ankle joint as well as problems with tendons and ligaments. And individuals who have suffered a previous ankle sprain are at risk for additional medical complications. For more information on ankle sprains and strengthening exercises, visit our website at www.pffpc.com.

Do engage in exercise and sports and maintain an active lifestyle, but think ahead and avoid risk factors that will make you susceptible to ankle sprains.



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