

*This fact sheet has been developed in consultation with the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Orthopaedic team and Consumers.*

*Information contained in this fact sheet is a guideline for care only. Please consult with your doctor or health professional to make sure that this information is right for you.*

**Metro North**  
Hospital and Health Service

### **Worries or concerns**

For any immediate concerns or questions regarding your injury please contact:

- **Your General Practitioner (GP).**  
They are able to speak directly to an Orthopaedic team at Redcliffe Hospital or Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital if required
- **13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)** for health advice, triage and referral from a Registered Nurse 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and at the cost of a local call. 13 HEALTH provides access to interpreting services for callers not confident with English.

**In a medical emergency go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000).**

# **ANKLE SPRAINS OR AVULSION FRACTURES**

Fact Sheet

## Your injury

An ankle sprain occurs when you “roll your ankle”, over-stretching the ligaments (fibrous bands that hold the ankle together).

An avulsion fracture occurs when a small flake of bone comes away with the ligament, and is treated similarly to an ankle sprain.

Your injury has been assessed as not requiring specialist orthopaedic care and it is likely you will make a good recovery.

## TREATMENT

Treat the injury using the R.I.C.E principle for the first 72 hours post-injury:

- **Rest** and avoid activities that cause pain. Use crutches if you are unable to put weight on your leg comfortably
- **Ice** – apply ice in a damp tea towel to the area for 15-20 minutes every 1-2 hours when awake
- **Compression** – apply a firm bandage from toes to above the ankle, making sure blood flow is not restricted nor pain increased. Remove before bed
- **Elevation** – elevate your foot above the level of your heart when possible.

Some sprains or avulsions may require an ankle brace, boot or plaster cast to support the ankle during healing.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

### AFTER 2 – 3 DAYS

- Walk as normally as possible (as pain allows) as soon as possible
- Prevent ongoing pain and stiffness by **gently** exercising the ankle. Move it through all ranges of movement (up and down/down and in/up and out/circles). Do calf strengthening exercises such as rising up and down on toes as many times as you can.

### HEALING TIMEFRAME

- On average simple ankle sprains usually recover within 1 – 3 weeks.
- If after 1 week the ankle is still very sore, swollen or you cannot use it, please see your GP for advice.
- If you are using a brace or boot, gradually discard it over 3 – 4 weeks as pain settles
- Make sure to keep your unaffected joints, such as your hip and ankle, moving freely.

### GETTING BACK TO NORMAL

- After the first few days slowly increase your activity levels as pain allows. Mild pain is expected, but significant pain should be avoided
- It might take several weeks for symptoms to settle completely. If not significantly better after 2 – 3 weeks contact your GP for advice and possible referral to physiotherapy.

## PAIN RELIEF AND COMFORT

- Regular pain relief such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory medications can be used
- Wear supportive shoes for several weeks.

### When can I...?

Weight bear	As soon as pain allows
Play sport	Once pain is resolved and full range of movement has returned
Return to work	Consult your doctor
Drive	Consult your doctor

*The above timeframes are a guide only and do not apply to all ankle sprains or avulsions.*