



Ankle Instability

Podiatry Service

Ankle instability is when your ankle feels like it is 'giving way' on you.

This can happen during standing, walking or when playing sports.

You may complain of:

- Turning in on the ankle especially on uneven ground
- Swelling
- Pain or tenderness.

It usually develops after an ankle sprain. When you sprain your ankle some of the connective tissue (ligaments) is stretched and some fibres may have torn.

These ligaments support the ankle and help with your balance. This means after an ankle sprain your ankle is weaker and your balance is reduced.

Without rehabilitation the ankle is at risk of spraining again. The more sprains you have the weaker and more stretched the ligaments become, resulting in instability.

Treatment

Firstly the podiatrist will examine your ankle looking for tender areas, swelling and instability.

The podiatrist may then refer you to physiotherapy for rehabilitation.

Rehabilitation will strengthen the ankle and retrain your balance giving the ankle the support it needs.

With this information you can start your rehabilitation straight away with these simple exercises.

Stretch tight muscles

When your ankle is painful after an injury, you walk with a limp. This makes the muscle at the back of your leg (calf) tight and uncomfortable.



Stretch the muscle as the podiatrist has shown you three times a day for 30 seconds firstly with your knee straight then with it bent.

Strengthen your muscles

With ankle instability your ankle will want to turn inwards, to stop this we need to make the muscles that turn your foot outwards stronger.

Sit on the floor with your legs out straight, turn your feet so the soles of your feet face each other (inwards) then turn the soles of your feet away from each other (outwards).

You should do these exercises 20 times three times per day.

Retrain your balance

By retraining your balance you can support the ankle and reduce instability.

Here are some ideas:

- Balance on one leg, compare right to left
- Balance on one leg and close your eyes
- Throw and catch a ball balancing on one leg
- Walk as if on a tight rope forwards and backwards
- Try walking on your heels or on your toes.
- Spend five minutes a day doing balancing activities.
- You may be given insoles to stabilise your ankle.

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