



CARE INSTRUCTIONS

KAISER PERMANENTE

Ankle Sprain

Your Kaiser Permanente Care Instructions

Your ankle hurts because you have stretched or torn ligaments, which connect the bones in your ankle. Your X-rays did not show any broken or displaced bones.

Ankle sprains may take from 6 weeks to several months to heal. Usually, the more pain and swelling you have, the more severe your ankle sprain is and the longer it will take to heal. You can heal faster and regain strength in your ankle with good home treatment.

It is very important to give your ankle time to heal completely, so that you do not easily hurt your ankle again.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Prop up your foot on pillows as much as possible for the next 3 days. Try to keep your ankle above the level of your heart. This will help reduce the swelling.
- Your doctor or other health care professional may give you a splint, a brace, an air stirrup, or another form of ankle support to protect your ankle until it is healed. Wear it as directed while your ankle is healing. Do not remove it unless your doctor or other health care professional tells you to. After the ankle has healed, ask your doctor or other health care professional whether you should wear the brace when you exercise.
- Put ice or cold packs on your injured ankle for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. (Put a thin cloth between the ice pack and your skin.) Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Keep your splint or brace dry.
- If you were given an elastic bandage, keep it on for the next 24 to 36 hours but no longer. The bandage should be snug but not so tight that it causes numbness or tingling. To rewrap the ankle, begin at the toes and wrap around the ankle in a figure-eight pattern, ending several inches above the ankle.

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- Use crutches until you can walk without pain. Try to bear some weight on your injured ankle while using crutches if you can do so without pain. This helps the ankle heal.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor or other health care professional gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor or other health care professional if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
 - Do not take two or more pain medicines at the same time unless the doctor or other health care professional told you to. Many pain medicines have acetaminophen, which is Tylenol. Too much acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be harmful.
- You may use warm packs after 3 days for 15 to 20 minutes at a time to ease pain.
- If you have been given ankle exercises to do at home, do them exactly as instructed. These can promote healing and help prevent lasting weakness.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. As a partner in your health care, you can do things like keep all scheduled visits, be sure you know the results of all tests and labs ordered as part of your care, and keep an up-to-date personal list of the medicines you are taking. Know how to contact us between visits, and call your doctor or other health care professional if you have signs that you are having problems.

When should you call 911?

If you think you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 immediately or seek other emergency services. An example of a symptom that may be an emergency is:

- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood.

When should you call your doctor or other health care professional?

- You have increased or severe pain.
- Your foot is cool or pale or changes color.
- You have tingling, weakness, or numbness in your toes.
- Your cast or splint feels too tight.
- You have signs of a blood clot, such as:

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- Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
- Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.
- Your ankle has not improved after 1 week.
- You have swelling and bruising that lasts more than 2 weeks.
- You still cannot walk without pain after 2 weeks.

How can you learn more about ankle sprains?

- *Log on:* members.kp.org. Search for **ankle sprain** in the **Health encyclopedia**.
- *Look in:* Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook.
- *Listen to:* Kaiser Permanente Healthphone: 1-800-332-7563. For a list of topics, go to members.kp.org and search for **healthphone**.

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