

GP BULLETIN: A NEWSLETTER FOR GPs BY HEALTHWAY MEDICAL



WHY IT MAY NOT BE JUST A SIMPLE ANKLE SPRAIN?

Dr Gowreeson Thevendran

MBChB (Bristol), Dip.Sports Med(UK), FRCS (Tr&Orth) FAMS (Singapore)

Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Island Orthopaedics

Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital/ Mount Alverina Hospital

Acute ankle injury is a common musculoskeletal injury in athletes and sedentary persons. Lateral ankle inversion sprain is the most frequent diagnosis in ankle injuries.¹

Risk factors



History of previous ankle sprain is the commonest risk factor. Ankle joint laxity may also contribute to the risk.¹

Anatomy



Typical ankle sprain is an inversion injury that occurs in the plantar-flexed position.¹

Most commonly injured ligaments are anterior talofibular, calcaneofibular and posterior talofibular ligaments.¹

Key examination findings



Swelling, haematoma, pain on palpation and a positive anterior drawer test suggest severe sprains.¹

Associated injuries



Look out for associated injuries to tendons, cartilage and bone^{2,3}

Tendon injuries



Peroneal tendons maybe damaged, presenting as persistent ankle pain associated with activity.²

Cartilage injuries



Cause persistent ankle pain lasting more than 3 months. MRI scan is required to exclude cartilage injuries.³

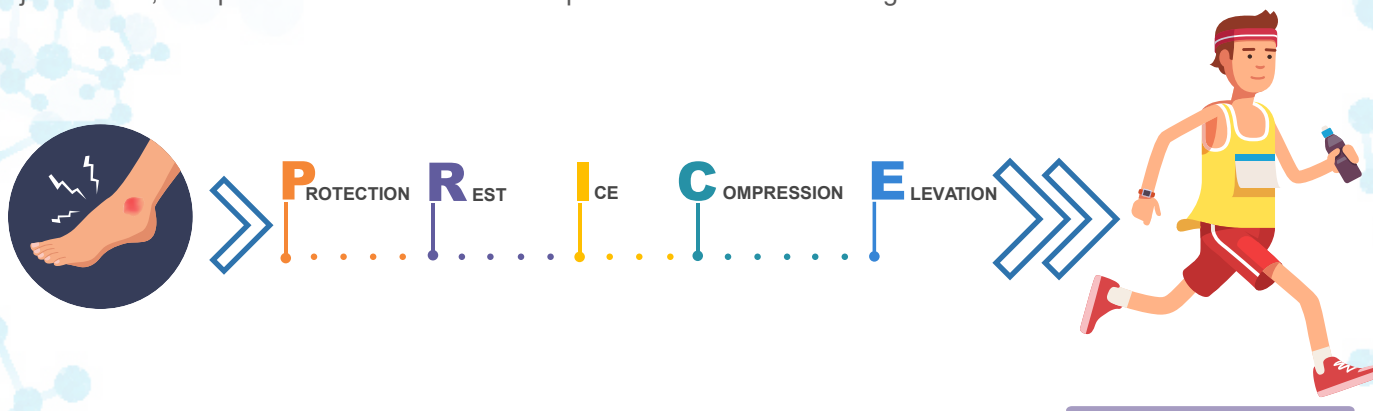
Inadequate treatment of ankle sprains can lead to chronic problems such as decreased range of motion, pain and joint instability.¹

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WHY IT MAY NOT BE JUST A SIMPLE ANKLE SPRAIN? (contd.)

Management of acute ankle injury: the PRICE protocol¹

PRICE protocol involves elevating the ankle and protecting it with a compressive device. Ice is applied to the injured ankle, and patient is advised to rest for up to 72 hours to allow the ligament to heal.¹



Early exercises



Exercises to restore motion and strength should start within 48 to 72 hours of injury.¹

Investigations



Perform an MRI if high-grade ligament injuries, osteochondral defects, syndesmotic injuries and occult fractures are suspected.⁴

Chronic Ankle Instability



Many patients with LAI suffer from persistent pain, swelling and instability for at least 12 months after the initial ankle sprain.⁴



Key messages:

- Simple sprains heal uneventfully in 4-6 weeks with the PRICE treatment protocol.
- Silent cartilage or tendon injuries can result in long-term complications, hence early intervention is critical.
- Injuries which do not resolve in 4-6 weeks should be further investigated using MRI.

Abbreviations

MRI, magnetic resonance imaging; LAI, lateral ankle injury

References

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Strictly for health care professionals only. Full prescribing information is available upon request.

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