



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™*

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Sports Medicine: Ankle Dislocation or Subluxation**

The ankle joint is made up of two lower leg bones (tibia and fibula) and a foot bone (talus). A dislocation is an injury to a joint causing the bones to no longer meet together correctly. In the ankle, this can occur when the talus no longer is in position with the tibia and fibula. A subluxation is a partial dislocation. When an ankle is subluxed or dislocated, the ligaments are often stretched or torn, and there may be a break in the bone.

### **Signs and symptoms**

- sudden joint pain, swelling and bruising
- unable to bear weight
- a deformed looking ankle with limited or no movement in the foot or ankle

### **Increased risk**

- repeated injury to the ankle like previous ankle sprain(s)
- having dislocated the ankle in the past
- contact sports or sports that require side-to-side movements and jumping (football, basketball, soccer)
- shoes not having enough support
- looseness of joints and ligaments

### **Treatment**

- Medicine
  - Anti-inflammatory medicines, such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve®) may be recommended. Take these as directed by your health care provider.
  - Other minor pain relievers, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®), may be used.

- Muscle relaxers or anesthesia may be needed to allow the muscles to relax and decrease pain.
- Use of cold and heat
  - Cold should be applied for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to 3 hours and after any activity that makes symptoms worse. Use ice packs or an ice massage.
  - Heat should not be used on a new injury but may be used before doing stretching and strengthening activities prescribed by your health care provider or athletic trainer. Use a heat pack or a warm soak. Apply for 10 to 15 minutes.
- Once the joint has been reduced (put back in place) x-rays should be done to look for broken bones.
- Orthopedic aids
  - A cast or walking boot may be recommended to hold the ankle in place, keep it from moving, and allow the swelling to go down.
- Surgery may be needed for more severe injuries and complex fractures.
- Rehabilitation will be needed following immobilization or surgery to reduce swelling and regain motion, strength, and balance. This should be done under supervision of a physical therapist or athletic trainer.

## How to prevent

- Do correct warm-up and stretching before activity.
- Wear protective equipment and support (ankle brace).
- Use proper technique during running, cutting and jumping.
- Maintain good conditioning, flexibility, muscle strength, endurance and cardiovascular fitness.

## When to call the health care provider

Call your health care provider or the **Sports Medicine team** at **614-355-6000** if one or more of these happens

- pain, numbness, or turning pale in arms, hands, feet or legs
- pain, swelling or bruising get worse in spite of treatment
- new, unexplained symptoms develop

To schedule an appointment with Sports Medicine, visit [NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling](https://NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling) or scan this code

