



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

Helping Hand™

Health Education for Patients and Families

Sports Medicine: Chronic Ankle Instability (CAI)

Chronic ankle instability (CAI) is repeated giving out of the ankle. CAI can be both functionally unstable and mechanically unstable. Functionally unstable is the feeling of the ankle giving out. A mechanically unstable ankle is when the ankle feels loose due to the ligament not healing or healing in a stretched position.

Signs and symptoms

- on-going ankle pain
- feeling of ankle giving out or being loose
- pain, tenderness, swelling and bruising at the site of injury
- not able to run, cut or jump at full speed

Increased risk

- repeated injuries to the foot or ankle
- poor physical conditioning (strength and flexibility)
- being born with joint looseness
- returning to sports too soon after injury
- poor warm-up before practice or play
- activity where the foot may land sideways while running, walking or jumping
- high risk sports (basketball, volleyball, gymnastics)

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 or a topical cream.
- 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 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.
- Orthopedic aids
 - A brace, walking boot or compressive elastic bandage may be recommended to provide stability to the ankle.
 - Crutches may be needed in the beginning until you can walk without pain.
- Rehab
 - Rehab may be needed to regain motion & strength, and to retrain balance skills to prevent future injury. Your health care provider may refer you to a physical therapist or athletic trainer for more treatment.

How to prevent

- Finish all rehab after initial injury and balance training activities.
- Do correct warm-up and stretching before practice or competition.
- Use protective taping, strapping, braces or high-top tennis shoes.
- Maintain suitable conditioning, ankle and leg flexibility, muscle strength and endurance.
- Provide ankle support for at least 12 months following injury.

When to call the health care provider

Call your health care provider or the **Sports Medicine team** at **614-355-6000** if:

- symptoms get worse or do not improve despite treatment
- you experience locking or catching in the ankle
- you feel pain, numbness or cold in the foot
- new, unexplained symptoms develop

To schedule Medicine, visit NationwideChildrens.org/SportsMedicineScheduling or scan this code with your camera phone.

