



## WHAT IS A HIGH ANKLE SPRAIN:

A high ankle or syndesmosis sprain is an injury to the ligaments just above the ankle joint known as the syndesmotic ligaments. The main ligaments affected are the anterior tibiofibula ligament (AITFL), posterior inferior tibiofibular ligament (PITFL) and the interosseous ligament. The role of these ligaments is joining the tibia (shin bone) and the fibula (outside lower leg bone).

## INJURY FACTS:

A high ankle sprain is more debilitating than a normal ankle sprain and differentiating the two is important, as the recovery protocols are different. A high ankle sprain is a less common but more serious injury and often requires a longer recovery period.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:

You may have the following:

- Pain when the foot is rotated outwards
- Bruising through the higher ankle
- Pain with weight bearing
- Tenderness on palpation
- A feeling like 'the ankle is spreading apart'

## MECHANISM OF INJURY:

The most common mechanism is excessively twisting the foot outwards while the foot is in contact with the ground. This injury also occurs under heavy loads when the ankle is pushed into dorsiflexion such as landing from a height.

## PROGNOSIS/TIMELINES:

High ankle sprains are given a grade of 1, 2 or 3:

Grade 1: Considered a overstretching of the syndesmotic ligaments. When treated correctly these should recover in 6 weeks

Grade 2: Tearing of the syndesmotic ligaments and separating of the tibia and fibula. These normally require extensive rehabilitation and recover in 6-12 weeks.

Grade 3: More serious injury that often require long periods of immobilisation and/or surgery. Often a screw is put in place to hold the tibia and fibula together. Recovery I usually 6 months.



## TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- Bracing and taping
- Massage
- Joint mobility techniques
- Dry needling
- Gait re-education
- Strengthening and mobility exercises
- Balance and proprioception training

## PHYSIOTHERAPY TREATMENT AIMS:

1. Pain relief and joint protection
2. Improve weight bearing and walking
3. Restore range of motion
4. Increase calf and ankle strength
5. Restore balance and proprioception
6. Restore function
7. Return to sport

