

GRADE I, II, III LATERAL ANKLE SPRAINS

NOTE: Progression through the phases depends on the extent of ligament injury, resolution of pain, and weight-bearing ability of the patient. Return to full activities for Grade I is typically 3-4 weeks, Grade II is 6-8 weeks and Grade III is dependent on orthopedic management choice.

Phase I – Acute/ Maximal Protection (0 – 7 days)

Goals:

- Maintain ankle ROM
- Control pain, edema, and effusion
- Retard muscle atrophy
- Protect joint stability

Day 1 - Immediate Post-injury:

- Implement RICE regimen (Rest , Ice, Compression and Elevation)
- WBAT with removable splint/brace; crutches if needed

Days 2 – 7:

- Modalities (cryotherapy, whirlpool, contrast baths, e-stim, etc.)
- AROM for PF/DF/EVER
- Strengthening:
 - T-band for PF/DF
 - Manual resistance for PF/DF
 - Isometric for INV/EVER
- Stationary cycling as tolerated for cardiovascular endurance and ankle ROM

Phase II - Sub-Acute/Early Rehab (8 – 20 days)

Criteria to progress to Phase II:

- Stabilized swelling
- Decreased pain

Goals:

- Regain and improve muscle strength
- Return of normal motion and arthrokinematics
- Improve neuromuscular control

Week 2:

- Continue AROM for PF/DF/EVER
- AquaCiser workouts (forward walking only)
- Begin flexibility exercises for gastrocnemius and soleus
- Strengthening:
 - Continue T-band for PF/DF
 - Progress isometric EVER → T-band EVER
 - Begin closed chain strengthening (shuttle, step-ups, toe raises)



Home to the Texas Rangers

Phase III - Chronic/Late Rehab (3 – 7 weeks)

Criteria to progress to Phase III:

- Full weight bearing tolerated (rapid for Grades I & II)
- Near normal dorsiflexion
- No pain or swelling after exercise
- Strength equal to 70% of contralateral side

Goals:

- Full, pain-free ankle ROM
- Improve strength, power, and endurance
- Improve proprioceptive control
- Prepare athlete to begin interval sports program

Weeks 3 – 7:

- Continue ROM/flexibility exercises; Begin INV AROM
- Strengthening:
 - Continue T-band, manual resistance and closed chain exercises
 - Begin strengthening into INV with T-band and manual resistance
 - Begin isokinetics (PF/DF and then progress to INV/EVER)
- Begin proprioception exercises (BAPS, mini-tramp, Biodex Stability System)
- Start sport-specific agility/endurance drills progressing as pain/function allows
- Initiate interval sports program

Phase IV – Return to Function/Sport (8 weeks on)

Goals:

- Progressively increase activity level to prepare for full functional return to sports

Maintenance Program:

- Continue strengthening exercises
- Continue flexibility exercises
- Continue proprioceptive activities
- Continue agility drills/interval sport program

Return to Sport Criteria:

- Released by physician
- Full, non-painful ROM
- Satisfactory clinical exam
- Satisfactory strength (>15% deficit on Biodex, 5/5 MMT)
- Satisfactory completion of interval sport program at full speed

The above program may be accelerated for Grade I sprains or may be extended depending on the severity of the injury for Grade II and III. The above schedules are suggested guidelines.