

# Preventing ankle injuries - An exercise approach

If you are participating in a high intensity activity such as soccer, netball, basketball, running or hiking chances are you've had an ankle injury in the past.

The most common ankle injury is the inversion injury where your foot rolls inwards and the ligaments on the outside of the ankle are damaged.

If you have just injured your ankle, RICE: rest, ice, compression and elevation is still the number one rule. If you are wanting a faster return to activity, early mobilisation is indicated and your physiotherapist can assist you with the right advice to get you moving and reduce your pain.

Whether you have recently injured your ankle or wish to avoid any further risk of injury, there are some preventive steps you can take. Proprioception and balance exercises are the most effective way of not only rehabilitating an injured ankle but also preventing ankle injuries. They teach your body to control the position of your joint, this can be done by using an uneven surface such as a wobbleboard, piece of foam or a bosu ball. Using an uneven surface makes movements unpredictable and re educates your body to react to unstable movements such as a fast change of direction. Try these exercises 3-4 times per week to increase your ankle strength and balance:

1- Single Leg Balance : Balance on one leg with your eyes open and do 3 sets of 30 seconds. To progress this exercise include turning your head at the same time, closing your eyes or progress to an unstable surface such as a wobbleboard, disc or bosu ball.

2- Step Lunge: Step forward until your thigh is almost parallel to the ground keeping your head upright and back straight. Push off and return back to standing on one leg. To progress try either standing on a disc or bosu ball and stepping forward onto the ground or stepping forward on to the bosu ball or disc.

3- Resisted Eversion: Place a resistance band around both of your feet and rotate your feet upwards and outwards against the resistance band. Try 3 sets of 10.