

Lateral Ankle Sprain: CHIROPRACTIC TREATMENT HELPS PUT YOU BACK ON YOUR FEET

Important steps that should be incorporated into treatment of LAS as soon after injury as possible can be remembered using the acronym R.I.C.E.

O verview: Sprains are injuries which involve stretching or tearing of ligaments. Lateral ankle sprain (LAS), the most common type of ankle sprain, occurs when the foot rolls inward, overstretching the ligaments on the outer side of the foot and ankle; because the foot inverts (rolls inward), it is sometimes referred to as inversion ankle sprain.

According to the American Family Physician (www.aafp.org), ankle sprains are one of the most common types of musculoskeletal injuries, sprains account for up to 75% of all ankle injuries, and more than 40% of ankle sprains have the potential to become chronic if not properly treated.

As with all types of sprain, LAS severity is defined on a three-tiered scale, as discussed in symptoms.

Symptoms:

Grade I – Over-stretching and possible partial tear of ligament

- Mild tenderness
- Mild swelling
- Able to bear weight and walk, with only slight (or no) loss of function
- No ankle instability

Grade II – Incomplete tear of the ligament

- Moderate pain
- Moderate swelling
- Mild to moderate bruising
- Tenderness over the ankle and foot
- Pain with weight-bearing or walking – some loss of function
- Mild to moderate ankle instability

Grade III – Complete tear of the ligament

- Severe swelling
- Severe bruising
- Inability to put weight on the ankle or walk – complete loss of function
- Instability of the ankle

YOUR TREATMENT

A variety of treatment options may be considered for the treatment of lateral ankle sprain (LAS). The decision on which treatment should be used will be based on your preferences, examination findings, experience treating patients with similar conditions and the best available scientific evidence. American Family Physician (www.aafp.org) has stated that “Without adequate care, acute ankle trauma can result in chronic joint instability” – therefore it is important to complete whichever treatment option you choose.

FUNCTIONAL TREATMENT involves important steps that should be incorporated into treatment of LAS as soon after injury as possible. The steps to take can be remembered using the acronym **R.I.C.E.**

- **Rest** the foot – stay off it.
- **Ice** – apply ice to the injured area. ALWAYS cover the ice (or ice pack) so that it does not come into direct contact with the skin. Apply ice for 20 minutes of every hour you are awake – unless directed to adhere to a different icing schedule. Ice will reduce the swelling.
- **Compression** – apply a bandage or other method of support and compression for the injured areas. Ask your Doctor of Chiropractic (or other treating health care provider) for information on correct wrapping techniques. Avoid wrapping the ankle too tightly; but too loose will be useless.
- **Elevation** – put your feet up!

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The Foundation for Chiropractic Education and Research (FCER) often receives requests for demographic data on chiropractors and the conditions they frequently see in practice. Every five years, the National Board of Chiropractic Examiners (NBCE) conducts a survey of Doctors of Chiropractic to gather this information. Results of the *Job Analysis of Chiropractic 2005* include:

- In addition to the DC degree, most chiropractors also have a baccalaureate degree (BA or BS).
- A majority of chiropractors receive at least 15 hours or more of continuing education credit each year.
- Chiropractors see patients with neurological problems, joint problems, and muscle problems in a "typical" week.
- In a typical month, chiropractors may also see patients with conditions such as fibromyalgia, carpal tunnel syndrome, obesity, menstrual disorders, and others.
- A "typical" chiropractor uses five or six different adjusting techniques in practice, depending on the need of the patient.
- In addition to the adjustment, many chiropractors also use treatments such as ice packs, trigger point therapy, electrical stimulation, hot packs, massage, traction, mobilization, ultrasound, nutritional counseling, recommendations for exercise, and advice about activities of daily living.
- Sixty percent of chiropractic patients are female; patients range in age from younger than 5 years to 65 and older.

National Board of Chiropractic Examiners. *Job Analysis of Chiropractic 2005*. Greeley, Colorado; January 2005.

For more information on NBCE, go to www.nbce.org. More information on FCER can be found at www.fcer.org.

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Additional steps that may be taken as part of "functional treatment" include range of motion exercises, strength training, balance exercises, and steps to increase weight-bearing as appropriate.

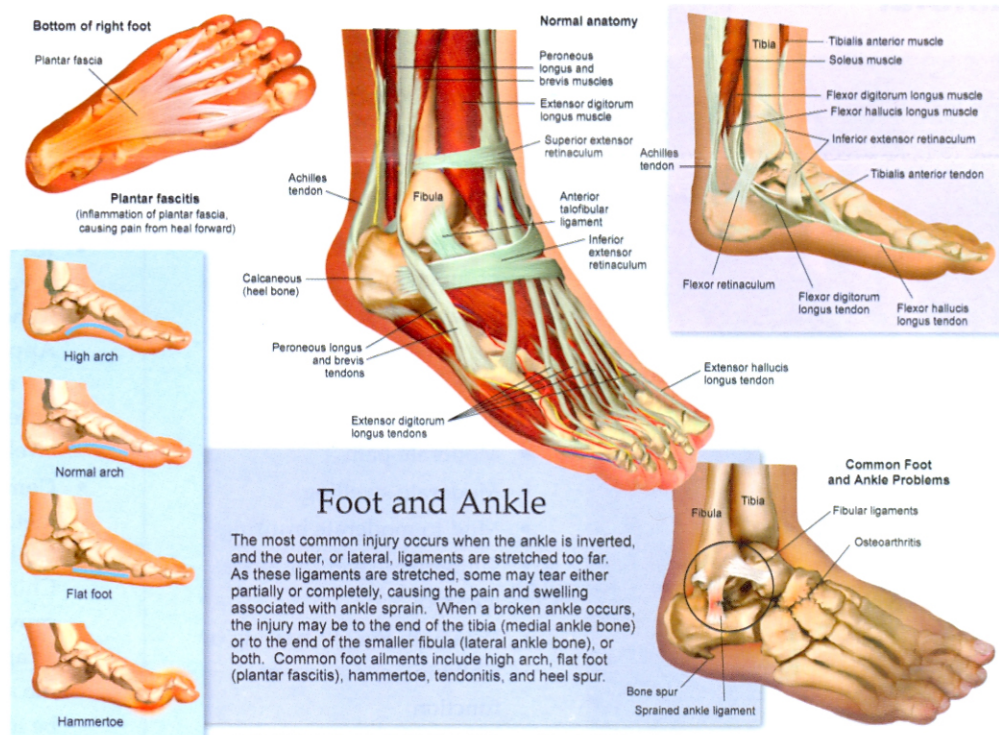
MANIPULATION/MOBILIZATION of the ankle and joints of the feet may be used in the treatment of LAS, and there is some evidence to support its effectiveness. Mobilization involves putting the joint and soft tissues of the foot through normal range of motion in controlled stretches. Manipulation, also called adjustment, may relieve the pressure and improve function of the joints involved.

COMFREY ROOT, applied in an ointment to the foot and ankle may be recommended. Comfrey root extract is thought to relieve pain, promote healing, and reduce swelling and bruising. Some research has suggested it is better than placebo and at least as good as topical non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

LOW LEVEL LIGHT LASER may help some manage lateral ankle sprain, although there is still research needed to confirm efficacy. Laser may be applied to the affected joint and other necessary areas determined by examination. Laser is intended to activate endorphins, which naturally

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Illustrated HealthWays



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reduce pain. The treatment is painless and may require multiple treatments.

ULTRASOUND is thought to decrease inflammation and therefore may relieve symptoms of lateral ankle sprain, but further research is needed to verify its full value. Ultrasound therapy is applied to the foot and ankle over the injured area. Several treatments may be necessary.

ELECTRICAL MUSCLE STIMULATION is thought to decrease inflammation and therefore may relieve symptoms of LAS, but research is needed to verify its effectiveness. This form of therapy may also help to relax muscles and soft tissue.

YOUR ALTERNATIVES

Your condition may be best treated using both chiropractic treatments and other treatment from additional health care professionals. If your condition requires it, a direct referral for treatment may be made to medical, surgical or other health care providers.

NSAIDS, or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, whether over the counter or prescription, may relieve pain such that normal activities can be continued. Prescribed NSAIDs may either be in oral form or as a topical gel or patch. When taking pain relievers, keep in mind that lack of pain may make you forget that you have an injury. You will need to be vigilant to avoid reinjuring or exacerbating the foot.

SURGERY for lateral ankle sprain is controversial due to risks involved and high cost and a lack of demonstrated effectiveness over other treatment options. According to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons (www.orthoinfo.org), "Surgery is reserved for injuries that fail to respond to non-surgical treatment, and for persistent instability after months of rehabilitation and non-surgical treatment." Surgery performed is typically either arthroscopy or reconstruction, depending on the injury and repairs needed.



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News & Views

Seeing the Light

A common vision problem in older adults, called age-related macular degeneration (AMD), may be due to a combination of low antioxidants levels and exposure to sunlight. In AMD, the leading cause of vision loss in older people, damage to the macula – a structure in the retina – causes decreases in the ability to see fine detail. Though mostly protected from UV radiation by the outer eye, the retina is exposed to visible light, particularly blue light. When researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine in the UK looked at 4,753 people aged 65 and older, about half of whom had AMD, they found that those who had the lowest blood levels of antioxidants (vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, and zeaxanthin) but had the most exposure to blue light, they had higher risk of AMD. Without using supplements, people should be able to increase their levels of these antioxidants by eating plenty of foods like spinach, orange or yellow bell peppers, citrus fruits, vegetable oils and nuts and reduce sun exposure in the eyes by wearing sun glasses or wide-brimmed hats. The study was published in the journal *Archives of Ophthalmology*. (Reuters. October 14, 2008.)

What You SHOULD Give Your Kids

Kids – from birth to teenagers – should double their intake of vitamin D, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. Because evidence is increasingly linking vitamin D to problems such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease, pediatric experts are raising the daily recommended amount of vitamin D to 400 units daily (up from 200). The experts also recommend that this increase be received in supplement form as many people do not get the needed amount from food only and though the body can make the vitamin with sun exposure, the skin cancer risk makes this option less than ideal. Vitamin D can be found in fortified milk and foods, and in oily fish such as tuna, mackerel, and sardines. The November issue of Pediatrics will contain the new recommendations. (The Associated Press. October 12, 2008.)

What You Should NOT Give Your Kids

Because of the high risk of side effects and the low chances that the drugs are effective, drug companies have voluntarily adopted a campaign to get parents to stop giving over-the-counter cold and cough medicines to children under the age of 4 years. Children should also not be given antihistamines, a common ingredient in many "multiple symptom" formulas. Pediatrician groups have been calling for a ban on these products for children under the age of 6. (The Associated Press. October 7, 2008.)

Q: *Why might my chiropractor make dietary or nutritional recommendations as part of my treatment for pain?*

A Recovery from acute and chronic conditions requires proper treatment from your Doctor of Chiropractic, and that treatment includes the building blocks to enhance healing in the form of proteins, vitamins, and minerals. For example, ligaments, muscles, and other tissues affected by spinal injuries and strains need additional vitamins, such as B and C, as well as minerals like zinc, manganese, magnesium, and calcium to heal optimally. Your chiropractor will also recognize

the need for any additional nutrients that may be necessary depending on your unique physical and dietary circumstances.

Helping to build stronger, healthier muscles, ligaments, discs, bones, and nerves to help your current condition improve and to gain better health through your lifetime is an important responsibility of your Doctor of Chiropractic.

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