

# Ankle sprains

*Treating that pesky yet common sports injury*

*One of the most common sports injuries that occurs is the ankle sprain, especially during the basketball and volleyball seasons. Athletes are relieved when they injure their ankle and xrays don't show a fracture.*



Often we hear, "Oh good, it's just a sprain." However, if an ankle sprain is not treated correctly, it significantly increases the risk of future ankle injuries. Many of you probably know this from experience. Without proper rehabilitation, ankle injuries can lead to recurrent sprains, chronic pain and instability. The rehabilitation for ankle injuries is not difficult, and can prevent this chain of events.

#### **Dr. Delo sees patients at two locations:**

Lakeshore  
Orthopaedics, 1650 S.  
41st St., Manitowoc,  
320.5241

Two Rivers Health  
Center, 3310 45th St.,  
Two Rivers, 793-3900

When an athlete first sustains an acute ankle injury, it is important to rest, ice, elevate and make sure that there is not a fracture. Often we recommend crutches for the first 2-3 days to allow early healing. Then, once the pain improves, athletes can advance weight-bearing and start light rehabilitation exercises.

**During this period of time, the athlete should wear an ankle brace for protection and to prevent re-injury.**

Rehabilitation exercises include range-of-motion, strengthening and proprioception training. Proprioception is your ability to sense where your ankle is without looking. This is a nerve function, and it is disrupted when you sustain an ankle injury. Without this sense, you are much more likely to reinjure the ankle. Luckily, this can be retrained. Each high school has an athletic trainer who can practice these exercises with the athlete and help determine when they are safe to return to their sport without a high risk of reinjury.

Another thing to be aware of is the high ankle sprain. This injury is different and more significant than a normal ankle sprain. Classic ankle sprains involve only the ligaments on the outside of the ankle. High ankle injuries also involve the ligaments that stabilize the lower leg. Athletes often have more pain than with a classic ankle sprain, swelling in the ankle joint itself and pain extending up the leg. These ligaments require at least a short period of immobilization to heal properly. Often, weight-bearing x-rays or MRI is ordered to confirm this injury, and once confirmed, the athlete is placed in a cast boot for several weeks to a month. In severe high ankle sprains, surgical stabilization can be required.

There are exercise programs that have been developed to help prevent ankle injuries in high risk sports, and I think that these are good to incorporate into dynamic warmups. When ankle sprains do occur, it is important to recognize the injury and rehabilitate it correctly. This can help prevent future injuries and chronic problems.

*By Dr. Marjorie Delo,  
Lakeshore Orthopaedics,  
320.5241, [hfmhealth.org/delo](http://hfmhealth.org/delo)*



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## LAKESHORE ORTHOPAEDICS

*Dr. Marjorie Delo is a primary care sports medicine physician at HFM's Lakeshore Orthopaedics. With a fellowship in sports medicine, Dr. Delo specializes in the nonsurgical treatment of orthopaedic injuries and pain, offering comprehensive care for sports-related injuries. She works closely with student athletes throughout Manitowoc County on injury treatment and prevention, and runs the HFM Sports Concussion Clinic.*

