

Ankle and Foot Pain

The ankle and foot are essential for stability and balance, allowing standing, walking, jumping, and running. While deficiencies can present issues early on, left untreated, further problems can develop due to the repetition of activities under the constant stress of weight bearing loads. Some issues arise from improper biomechanics, while others relate to trauma, overuse, or muscular weakness. At times, conditions leave the foot and ankle severely restricted in terms of function, Gait, or walking, training provided by a skilled therapist can be necessary to learn or re-learn proper walking.

Some Ankle and Foot Issues include:

Ankle sprain: Overstretching tissues, commonly ligaments, beyond their maximum allowed length, causes damage to them. The most common sports injury involves a sprain to the ligaments over the outside of the ankle. Treated early by a skilled therapist, minor to moderate sprains can be resolved, allowing return to sports within a few weeks. Most importantly, exercises that focus on balance training should be incorporated into the rehab program to prevent recurrence.

Tendinitis: Tendon Inflammation. Commonly, the tendon that travels from the back of your lower leg and inserts on your heel, the Achilles, suffers from tendinitis. Other tendons can become problematic as well. These conditions frequently arise from compensation due to weakness in other parts of the body. Therapy is effective at treating both the symptoms and the source of the problem.

Plantar Fasciitis: Inflammation of the soft tissue on the bottom of the foot that courses from the heel to the base of the toes. This pathology can be particularly problematic for individuals who spend a great deal of time on their feet. Research shows physical therapy can significantly decrease recovery time. Orthotics or a night splint may be recommended by your therapist to help lessen the pain in the short term. Left untreated, pain can be ongoing for years and severely restrict function.

What can physical therapy do for Ankle and Foot pain?

Physical therapy is beneficial for the treatment of ankle and foot conditions, identifying and treating the source of the dysfunction. At times, your therapist will recommend the use of over the counter orthotics to alter poor biomechanics. Exercise, manual therapy, and other treatments are combined to relieve pain and improve function.

Common treatments for Ankle and Foot Pain:

Manual therapy: Hands-on therapy has been shown by research to be beneficial at the foot and ankle due to the superficial nature of the structures. Joint mobilization can diminish foot and ankle problems that impact other parts of the body, such as the knee or low back. Deep tissue massage can decrease pain and increase the ability to perform exercise.

Exercise: The most important component of almost every treatment plan, exercise is used to strengthen, stabilize, train, and repair the foot/ankle complex. Exercise is also completed at other parts of the body, such as the hip, to relieve foot and ankle conditions.

TENS/Ultrasound: Electrical stimulation and ultrasonic waves are used to decrease pain and inflammation, improving exercise tolerance.

Over The Counter Orthotics: Orthotics, or shoe inserts, may be recommended to alter biomechanics, decreasing pain and the persistence of repeated trauma to foot. Research supports the use of orthotics for foot pain, such as plantar fasciitis.

Iontophoresis: The use of electrical stimulation to push anti-inflammatory medication through the skin, reducing the pain and inflammation of irritated tissues.

Taping: The use of various tapes and methodologies, such as Kinesio and McConnell taping, to enhance joint support, muscle function, and blood flow. Taping is commonly used by professional athletes.