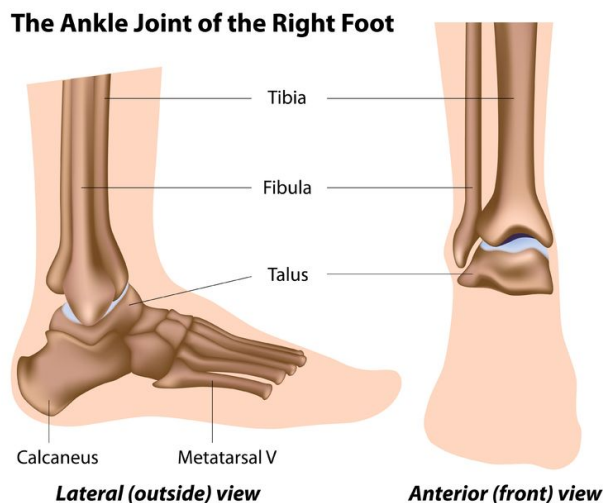


## Chronic Ankle Instability

An ankle sprain is one of the most common injuries suffered during athletic activities. A ligamentous sprain occurs when a ligament stretches or tears past its normal length. Each time the ankle is sprained, it is more likely to happen again due to weakening of the muscles and ligaments, causing instability. Typically, most injuries occur to the lateral ankle ligaments (most often the ATFL-anterior talofibular ligament). The ATFL becomes injured when weight is placed through the foot with the toes pointed down and the foot turned in, causing the ankle to roll outwards. Often the sprain occurs when walking or running on uneven surfaces or when participating in sports.

Chronic ankle sprains cause significant instability and happen more frequently if the ankle was not allowed to heal or was not rehabilitated properly. When ankle instability is severe, a sprain can happen during any activity due to extreme laxity of the ATFL.



Instability is characterized by tenderness to touch along the lateral ankle and persistent swelling and discomfort in the area. A person with ankle instability often has difficulty with balance or gait and range of motion may be limited. Strength and endurance deficits are usually present and neuromuscular control may be decreased.

Physical therapy is the treatment of choice in the rehabilitation of chronic ankle instability. The initial focus of rehab is to manage the inflammation and pain, utilizing the principles of RICE (rest, ice, compression, elevation), and protecting the ankle joint. If the sprain is severe, the ankle may need to be immobilized using a brace or an air cast. One of the primary goals of rehabilitation is to stabilize the ankle for prevention of injuries in the future.

Principles for physical therapy treatment are as follows:

- Range of Motion (ROM): gentle active or passive ROM in pain free range
- Resistance exercise, utilizing isometrics or elastic bands
- Weight bearing exercises, including balance/proprioception activities with the addition of advanced challenges (stable/ unstable surfaces, eyes open/ closed, double leg/ single leg)
- Gait training
- Recommendations of proper shoe wear/ arch supports

At Lakeshore Physical Therapy, our therapists work with each patient one-on-one to develop an individualized plan of care to achieve goals, return to sports, and eliminate the likelihood of reinjury. Every therapist at Lakeshore PT is knowledgeable and prepared to effectively treat ankle sprains, as well as many other injuries and dysfunctions.