

Ask a Foot and Ankle Surgeon

Why Won't My Ankle Sprain Heal?

by Suneel K. Basra, DPM, FACFAS

(NAPSA)—As a foot and ankle surgeon, I often hear “It’s just a sprain, no big deal.” Sometimes, however, a sprain can be, or become, serious. Sprained ankles are painful and can temporarily limit a patient’s ability to walk normally, so accurate diagnosis and treatment are necessary for proper healing.

When a foot and ankle surgeon examines your ankle, he or she can determine the location and severity of



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the sprain, if the ligament is partially or fully torn, and if there is a broken bone or dislocation of the joint. All this affects treatment and recovery. A bone typically heals in six to eight weeks; a ligament sprain can take three to six months.

Most ankle injuries—roughly 80 percent—require no surgical intervention. If just the outer ligament is injured, we can typically reduce pain and swelling with a combination of ice, wraps and rest to lessen the chance of further tearing of the ligament.

The other 20 percent of patients might not have sought immediate care, and what began as a less severe sprain may have turned more severe, possibly requiring surgery.

Sprains not adequately rehabilitated or repeat injuries can cause chronic ankle instability—marked by persistent discomfort and a giving way of the ankle from stretched or torn ligaments. Proper rehabilitation and treatment can strengthen the muscles around the ankle and retrain the tissues within the ankle that affect balance to help prevent further sprains or injuries. Surgery is sometimes also needed.

For more information or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit www.FootHealthFacts.org, the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons’ patient education website.

• *Dr. Basra is a board-certified foot and ankle surgeon and Fellow Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.*