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## LOWER LEG/ANKLE/FOOT INJURIES

This program is designed to help you rehabilitate after an ankle sprain, foot surgery, tendonitis, or other lower leg injuries. Foot and ankle injuries involve numerous muscles and ligaments that usually heal with time and proper rehabilitation. The pain and swelling you may experience is your body's way of saying it's been upset. Be patient. Learn to listen to your body when rehabilitating from this or any other injury.

### LOWER LEG/ANKLE/FOOT PROGRAM

#### **RICE:**

**Rest-** The use of crutches is advised until you are able to walk without pain or a limp.

**Ice-** Icing multiple times a day is best, especially after activity/exercises.

**Compression-** If you have been fitted with an air splint or other ankle brace, you should be wearing this full time with an appropriate shoe until otherwise advised. You do not usually have to wear this at night unless it is more comfortable to do so.

**Elevation-** Get your leg elevated above your heart whenever possible.

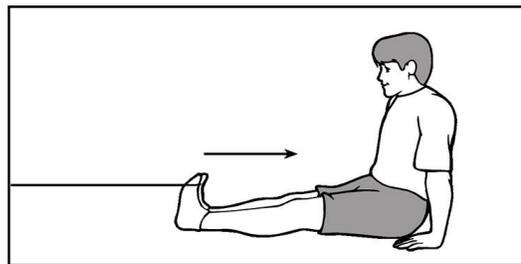
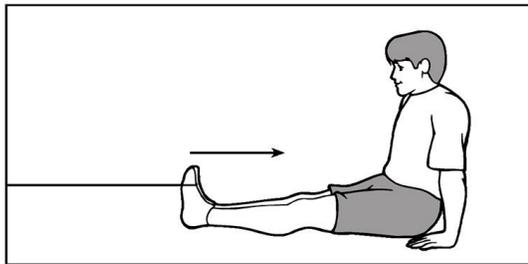
**WARM UP:** Get your blood flowing with some upper body or core exercises (arm curls, sit-ups, etc.)

**RANGE OF MOTION STRETCHES:** Move the ankle, foot and toes through a full range of motion. Pretend that your big toe is the tip of a pen and trace the alphabet letters or write words in the air. These stretches always work best in a warmed up body. You can perform these stretches multiple times a day.

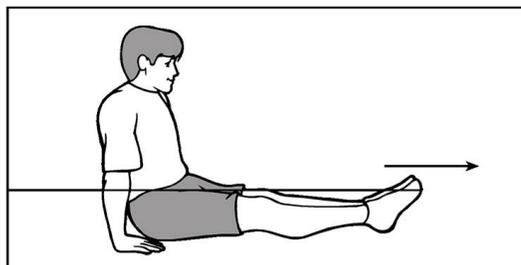
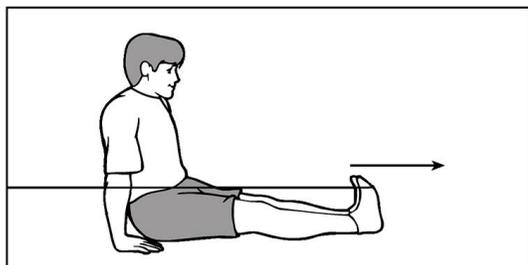
**EXERCISES:** These may be started immediately and consist of strengthening and balance activities. When performing the "sport cord" or other band exercises, follow these instructions:

- Place the free end of the cord in a door jamb or tie around/under something very heavy such as the foot of the couch or bed.
- Place the looped end around your foot as shown.
- Do these exercises by time, not repetitions. Start at 30 seconds with each position, progressing to 2 minute sets.
- Repeat each set 2 more times, for a total of 3 sets for each exercise.
- Do these exercises 2-3 times daily, if possible.
- You can adjust the tension of the cord as needed making sure the ankle is still moving through a full range of motion.

- 1. Dorsiflexion (Upward):** Sit facing the cord and pull the ankle and toes toward you. Feel the resistance while you pull up and then let down. The slower the better (two counts up, two counts down).

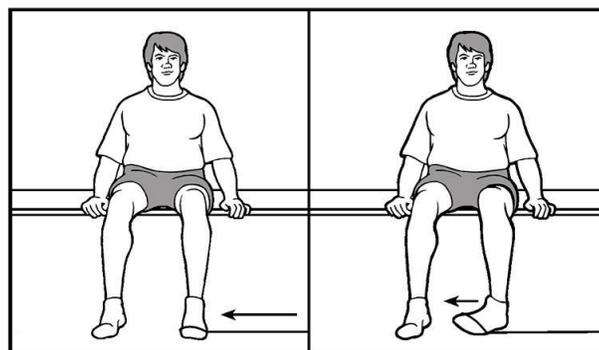


- 2. Plantarflexion (Downward):** Position your chair so that the cord is coming from behind you. Point your toes fully (like you would stepping on the gas pedal) and move slowly as described above. Feel the resistance through the full range of motion.

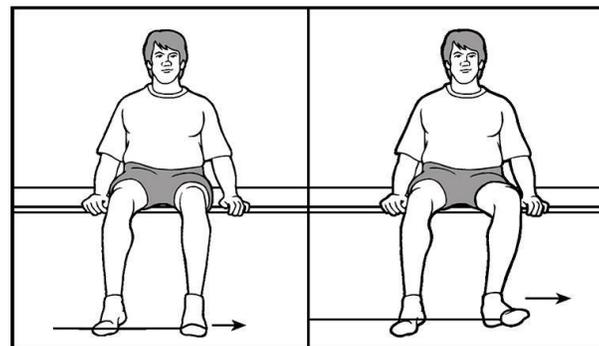


**\*\* The following exercises should start AFTER you can do 1 and 2 without pain.\*\***

- 3. Inversion (Inward):** In a seated position with foot in a resting position, gradually pull your foot up and in toward your body. This should be done with your ankle only, not your knee or hip. You should feel a good stretch on the outside of the foot, ankle, & leg with this exercise. Do one set with the ankle dorsiflexed to 90 degrees and one set with the toes pointed (plantarflexed).



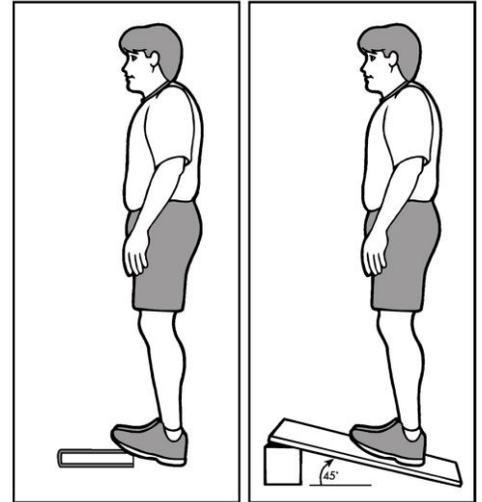
- 4. Eversion (Outward):** This is (not surprisingly) the opposite of inversion. Here the foot is pulled up and out away from the body. This exercise can also be repeated with the toes pointed. You might find this exercise to be the most painful b/c this is where most of the torn tissue is, so start SLOW & EASY.



**\*\*The following exercise can only be done once you are able to bear all your weight without pain and do all previous exercises without pain.\*\***

**5. Tilt-Board Stretching:** There are three different positions to this aspect of your workout. To try and stretch all of the muscles in the back of your leg- Toes should be slightly pointed in, straight ahead, & slightly pointed out. Play around with the various positions over the course of the day.

- Place the balls of both feet on a phone book, text book, or piece of lumber 2-5" in height. Those of you with chronic issues might even make an official "tilt board" with an angle of 45°.
- Keep your heels on the ground/board while you bring your hips forward and feel a good stretch in the back of your knees, legs, heels, and feet.
- Perform this stretch for up to 2 hours per day!
- Keep your "tilt-board" out at all times. Stretch while doing dishes, watching TV, chatting online or on the phone, etc.
- Once you are comfortable, try doing a tow raise from your tilt-board; holding for a count of 5 seconds at the top. Move up and down SLOWLY & IN CONTROL.



**6. Ball-Balance:** Place a soccer ball or basketball under your foot while in a seated position and simply roll it about. This exercise is intended to educate your ankle along with your foot, knee, and hip. Not only is this rehab for now, but hopefully your body will learn to protect from further injury. Once you are comfortable, you may progress to doing this exercise while standing.



**7. Single-leg Balance:** Practice standing on one leg with a chair in front of you for support. Keep the knee of your standing leg slightly bent. Hold this position for 5 seconds, and work your way up to 30-60 seconds. Try not to touch down with your foot. When you are ready to make this exercise more challenging, try closing your eyes! This is another exercise that should be done obsessively.



8. **Dyna-Disc/Balance-Board:** Dyna-disc and/or balance board are more advanced balance tools that are great for rehab and also for guarding against future injury. If you have chronic leg, ankle, or foot issues, you should invest in some of this equipment ([www.performbetter.com](http://www.performbetter.com))



#### OTHER ACTIVITIES:

- **Massage** is a great way to help gain motion in your ankle/foot. Get the injured ankle in a relaxed position; put some oil/lotion on your hands, and start massaging from toes up toward your heart. Go slowly over swollen areas. Don't be afraid to dig your fingers in and mobilize the tendons and muscles.
- **Cycling** is a great activity for ankle rehabilitation. Begin with half-revolutions, simply moving back and forth in the bottom half of the peddle revolution. If there is pain with the pedal stroke, try taking off the tow clip and pushing through the heel. Gear down for easy motion on the uphill.
- **Running** in the pool in chest deep water is also great. Time yourself. Get your heart rate up and have a terrific workout. (ask for our water exercises)
- **Straight ahead** activities with no twisting or jumping are OK as long as there is no pain associated with the activity (elliptical, x-country skiing-classic, walking, rowing machine).
- **Bracing:** For ankle injuries, wear your brace longer then you think you'll need it. At least until the end of the current sports season (for athletes). You will not become "dependent" and it will help your ankle become "educated" to prevent future issues.