Dear Alice,

What is the best home treatment for an apparently badly sprained ankle?

? Limping

**Answer**

Dear Limping,

Badly sprained, huh? The severity of the sprain will determine the treatment for this very common injury. A relatively minor sprain can benefit from the RICE technique at home: rest (keep your ankle immobilized), ice [2] (apply for 20 minute increments, 3-4 times daily), compression (use bandages or ace-wrap), and elevation (prop your ankle above your heart). RICE helps control swelling and facilitates drainage of excess blood and fluid for a few days until you feel like you can slowly begin putting weight on your bad ankle again. Then, you can gradually return to activities that put stress on your ankle, such as playing sports or exercising. It may help to wear an ankle brace or wrap/tape your ankle for a while after your injury. This will provide some additional support and help prevent re-injury. Over-the-counter pain relievers can also help stop swelling and reduce pain.

If the sprain is more serious, you can still use the RICE guidelines at home, but it might take a longer time to heal. It may take several weeks or even months to return to activities that require a lot of turning and twisting from your ankle. A sprained ankle can happen whenever the foot twists, turns, or rolls beyond its normal position, which stretches or even tears the ligaments in your ankle. Ligaments are elastic structures that stabilize and hold joints in place. For a complete tear/rupture of a ligament, the road to recovery can include immobilization, a short leg cast, walking-boot, or a cast-brace for several weeks, or even, possibly, surgery. It?s a good idea to visit your health care provider to have it checked out if your injury does not respond to the RICE treatment within a few days, to make sure it?s not something more serious.

To help prevent future sprains, it helps to warm up before you exercise and to wear proper and comfortable footwear. Stay aware of uneven surfaces as you walk and step with care. Hope you make a full rehabilitation and recovery fast!

Alice!
Related questions

Achilles tendon injury [6]
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Resources

Medical Services (Morningside) [11]
Medical Services (CUMC) [12]
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