You don't have to be an athlete to suffer a sprained ankle.

In fact, ankle sprains can happen to just about anyone, doing just about anything. If, unfortunately, you have experienced an ankle sprain, you can speed the recovery process by remembering to apply these methods:

- Protection
- Relative rest

**Protection**, by avoiding or minimizing activities and situations that could result in re-injury, and possibly wearing an ankle-stabilizing brace if you have ankle pain, weakness and or joint laxity or instability.
Relative -- rather than absolute -- rest, meaning being as active as your symptoms permit, particularly including low-impact or no-impact cross-training activities to regain or maintain aerobic fitness.

Ice application for 15-20 minutes. This is particularly useful during the first 24 hours after injury in reducing the degree of swelling that may otherwise occur, although, unfortunately, ice isn't expected to reduce swelling that is already present. (However, you can certainly reduce pain and inflammation with ice application more than 24 hours post-injury).

Compression, as can be provided by using an elastic bandage -- preferably in conjunction with also using a U-shaped piece of padding placed beneath the injured ankle, vs. compression with a pneumatic ankle brace (Aircast and others).

Elevation of your foot as much as possible -- ideally at or above the level of your heart. Prolonged periods of sitting on a chair with your foot on the floor beneath you would be the worst scenario.

Rehabilitation, including relevant strengthening and flexibility exercises, and in particular, balance and agility retraining.

If you have tried all of these strategies, yet fail to continue to improve, or if you want to clarify your diagnosis and the most appropriate treatment plan for you, consider consulting with your primary care physician or a sports medicine physician.

For more information, visit the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons website.

Related topics: ankle sprains, netwellness, sports medicine