

## Walking on a Sprained Ankle



If you have sprained an ankle, you may be puzzled when your doctor or physical therapist recommends walking on it. Although resting an injured ankle is wise immediately after an injury, the latest data suggest that you will benefit equally from walking on a properly supported ankle as soon as possible.

Successful recovery begins with immediate attention to the injury. Of course, you should see a doctor as soon as possible for proper evaluation of the injury. By acting quickly, you can reduce swelling and pain by using the P-R-I-C-E regimen.

- **P**rotection—Use an ankle brace, boot or supportive tape during the early postinjury days.
- **R**est—Get off of the foot as much as possible for the first 24 to 48 hours.
- **I**ce—Cool the inflammation and reduce swelling by applying ice packs or soaking your foot and ankle in cold water for 15 to 20 minutes, 3 to 5 times daily.
- **C**ompression—Use an ACE bandage or other supportive wrap to support the injured ligaments.
- **E**levation—Prop up your foot when you are seated, keeping it at or above the level of your hips.

Ankle sprains fall into 3 categories related to the severity of ligament damage and require different treatment and recovery times. A grade 1 sprain causes little damage to the ligaments, and although the ankle will be tender for a few days, you can walk on it after a short period of rest. At grade 2, there is some tearing of the tissues and a longer recovery time of up to 4 weeks. A grade 3 sprain involves bruising, swelling and the complete tear of ligaments; this level of injury may require surgery and 4 to 8 weeks of protection and rehabilitation before you return to full activity.

Starting ankle exercises the day following your injury with mild sprains and when the swelling subsides with severe sprains can increase the likelihood of a full recovery from an ankle sprain. We can design an exercise program to facilitate your safe return to full, normal activities while decreasing your likelihood of re-injury.