This is the tendon that attaches your calf muscles to your heel bone. Hold 15 seconds. You should feel a moderate pull, but no pain. Change legs and stretch the other leg.

Repeat ______ times, ______ times/day.

EXERCISES WITH RESISTANCE
Obtain a strip (about two feet long) of elastic belting material, surgical tubing (from a medical-supply store), or a bike tire inner tube. Work your ankle in four directions as shown in the figures. As you do each tube exercise, pull the tubing taut, heel on the floor, and make sure you do the exercises only with your foot and ankle, not your whole leg. The tube should be placed at the base of your toes.

Out and up
Sit on floor or chair. Loop tubing over foot and around table leg. With heel on floor, work ankle out and up.

In and up
As before, but loop tubing to provide tension against an inward move. With heel on floor, work ankle in and up.

Straight up
Loop tubing over foot and around a table leg. With heel on floor, work ankle straight up.

Straight down
Place tube loop under bottom of foot and hold top of loop with both hands. With heel on floor, work ankle down.

Repeat ______ times, ______ times/day.

HEEL RAISE
Stand on one foot. Slowly rise up on ball of foot and equally slowly lower heel back to floor. Progress to doing this exercise on the edge of a step. Be sure that your foot is secure against slipping.

Repeat ______ times, ______ times/day.

GENERAL EXERCISES
Swimming with swim fins and riding a bicycle or stationary bike can provide an excellent workout for your calf and ankle.

IN SUMMARY
An ankle sprain is a common injury that is usually not permanently disabling. Your physician is your best source of information about how to relieve your discomfort and enjoy life more after spraining your ankle.

ANKLE SPRAIN
THE INJURY

Sprains are very common ankle injuries, usually the result of the ankle turning in. An ankle sprain occurs when a ligament connecting bones or cartilage of the ankle is stretched, ruptured or torn.

Ankle sprains are immediately painful and incapacitating, and they can often develop into a chronic problem. But if treated quickly and properly, ankle sprains can heal well, allowing a safe and early return to activity.

You are more likely to sprain your ankle if
- You have sprained it before.
- You have weak or imbalanced muscles that can result in an unstable ankle joint.
- You use inappropriate/worn-out shoes that do not provide the proper support.
- You walk or exercise on uneven or slippery surfaces.
- You are overweight. Excess weight puts more strain on the ankle.
- There is a tendency in your family for sprains of this type.

DEGREES OF SEVERITY

Ankle sprains generally fall into three degrees of severity. The more severe the sprain, the longer it will take to recover.

First Degree
This injury is the most common and, if treated promptly, the most minor. Ligaments connecting bones of the ankle are stretched but not torn, with little swelling and no instability. With a first-degree ankle sprain, you will probably be able to return to some sports activity within a couple of weeks.

Second Degree
Ankle ligaments are partially torn in the second-degree ankle sprain, and the ankle usually swells immediately upon injury. There is bruising (black-and-blue marks). A second-degree ankle sprain may require a three- to six-week rest before you return to full activity.

Third Degree
The third-degree ankle sprain is a more serious tear of ligaments, but rarely requires surgery. A third-degree ankle sprain requires eight to twelve months for ligaments to fully heal.

TREATMENT

Treatment is divided into four stages. The rate of progress depends on the amount of pain and swelling and whether your doctor has used tape or a cast to stabilize your ankle.

STAGE 1 (the first 72 hours)
To reduce pain and swelling, apply ice to the ankle for 60 minutes every two hours; a plastic bag of crushed ice over a towel works well. Compression of the ankle may also limit swelling—an elastic bandage is usually sufficient. Stay off your feet and elevate the ankle as much as possible. Depending on the injury, your doctor may use tape, a splint, or a cast to immobilize the ankle.

Your doctor may also prescribe an anti-inflammatory/analgesic medication to relieve pain and to reduce swelling.

STAGE 2 (1st week)
You may be able to walk on the ankle as soon as it feels comfortable. If your doctor recommends, crutches can be used as partial support when you begin to walk. Further support for your ankle may be provided in the form of tape, a brace, or a cast. Pain will let you know how much activity is enough.

After an injury your ankle will get stiff. It is important to maintain the full range of motion of your ankle, even with external support. For exercise, rest your heel on the floor and write the alphabet in the air with your big toe, making the letters as large as you can.

STAGE 3 (2nd week or longer)
The crucial part of the treatment is a rehabilitation program to regain ankle flexibility and to strengthen supporting muscles. Your doctor will advise you about exercises and physical therapy.

STAGE 4 (variable)
Your ankle must be strong before you return to full daily activity or sports. Too early a return may lead to reinjury and a chronic problem.

You can usually begin to run when you can stand on the balls of the injured foot for 20 seconds and hop on the balls of your feet 10 times. At first, you should be jogging in a straight line. As you get stronger, you can progress to large figure 8's. Finally you can cut and zigzag. You can return to your sport when you can zigzag without pain or instability.

Your ankle should be protected for at least six months after injury. Follow your doctor's advice.

SHOES

While your ankle heals, use shoes that minimize slippage with strong, flat, even soles that are neither too spongy nor too thick. Walking shoes that fit well can help stabilize your foot.

EXERCISES

Exercising will strengthen muscles that support the injured area and help prevent reinjury and chronic problems. DO EACH PRESCRIBED EXERCISE TWO TIMES A DAY OR AS OFTEN AS YOUR DOCTOR RECOMMENDS.

STRETCHES

When performing any stretch, start slowly and never go beyond the point of a gentle pull. Don’t bounce, and remember to breathe normally. You should not feel pain.

Do stretches before and after activity. Lean against a table (a sturdy one that won’t move) with your back knee slightly bent and your front knee bent. Press forward until you feel a moderate stretch in the calf muscles of your back leg. Hold 15 seconds. Keeping both heels on the floor, increase the bend in the knee of your back leg until a moderate stretch is felt in your Achilles tendon.