

ANKLE SPRAINS 10-15 PERCENT OF LOST TIME

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One of the things Jacksonville is learning about the NFL is that nothing happens in a small way. We have reached the big-time; big-time crowds, big-time plays, big-time stadiums and, unfortunately, big-time injuries.

The first time the Jaguars experienced a significant injury was when running back Leon Brown sustained a severe fracture/dislocation to his ankle. Next, our promising young draft pick and offensive lineman, Marcus Price, suffered severe ligament damage to his ankle when he tore two ligaments. These injuries required surgical correction of the torn ligaments and insertion of metal plates and screws to repair the fractures and both players are out for the season.

On return from training camp, starting middle linebacker Keith Goganious sustained an injury to the ligaments that hold the two ankle bones together, and the ligament on the inside of his ankle was sprained. Fortunately, Keith's injury is not as severe and he responded well after only three weeks of rehabilitation. Keith was able to play during the season opener against Houston.

From the "weekend warrior" to the accomplished athlete, thousands of people each year to physicians with common ankle sprains. While knee injuries seem to claim more headlines, ankle sprains claim more players. Ankle sprains account for 10-15 percent of all time lost to injury in professional football. Artificial turf may increase the risk of sprains, but scientific studies do not confirm this. Defects or holes in grass fields may also contribute to ankle injuries.

When a strong sudden force, like a defensive linemen, strikes a joint, the ligament, bone, and joint can be damaged if surrounding muscles do not quickly decrease the stress on the joint. All ankle sprain are not alike and they are classified according to severity and type, so as to better provide proper treatment.

Mild or Grade One ankle sprains usually involve partial tearing of ligament fibers and minimum swelling. There is usually no joint instability. The ankle sprains usually occur when a person rolls his ankle and notices some immediate pain. Usually a person is able to complete the particular activity or "walk it off". However, usually within 24 hours there is some swelling and increased pain. Grade One ankle injuries are treated with ice, a small ankle brace, and early weight bearing.

Moderate, or Grade Two sprains, are characterized by immediate pain, swelling, bruising, and tenderness over the involved ligaments. This type of injury usually involves some partial type of joint motion. Some ligament fibers may completely, however, the overall stability of the joint is essentially intact with only a minimum amount of looseness within the ankle joint. Type Two injuries are also treated with an ankle brace or occasionally a

cast immobilization for a short period of time, followed by physical therapy and rehabilitation.

Severe or Grade Three are complete tears of ankle ligaments. They result in instability of the ankle, marked swelling, immediate and severe pain. They require crutches, ankle brace, or cast immobilization and in certain instances, even surgery to repair torn ligaments.

The most common ankle sprain is Type One, in which ligament on the outside of the ankle are injured. However, in professional sports, due to expert taping, these injuries are less common than in the “weekend warrior”. Often injuries resulting from the ankle turning out lead to tears of the inside of the ankle or tears of the front part of the ankle. These injuries are more severe and require 3-4 weeks recovery even in the well conditioned professional football player.

Quick diagnosis and early treatment of all ankle sprains can definitely speed recovery and reduce the risk of further injury. Don’t ignore any ankle injury. Under your physician’s care, you can, in all likelihood, be back to full recovery in a short time. Often x-rays are necessary to ensure there are no fractures or broken bones.

Immediately after an injury, most ankle sprains are treated by the RICE method: Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. After the initial pain and swelling subsides, many patients place their patients in a supervised rehabilitation program and in a matter of a week most people are back to full activity.