

Why are Ankle Sprains so Common in Netball?

- Netball is a dynamic game played on a hard surface.
- Players stop, land, change direction, do side to side movements, pivot, plant and cut multiple times during a game. These actions stress the ankle joint, especially the outer (lateral) side.
- Netball challenges balance, e.g. landing on one leg, landing on the circle edge and the footwork rule.
- Ankle reflexes (ability to react quickly) are challenged by the unpredictable nature of play, contact from opposition players and the tendency to land on the opposition's feet.

To cope with these challenges, Netball players need to have good ankle strength, good ankle range of movement, sound balance, safe landing strategies and quick reflex responses.

What is an Ankle Sprain?

An ankle sprain is a twisting injury that damages one or several, of the ligaments that support the ankle joint.

Ligaments are strong bands of fibrous tissue that stabilise joints by connecting the different bones together.

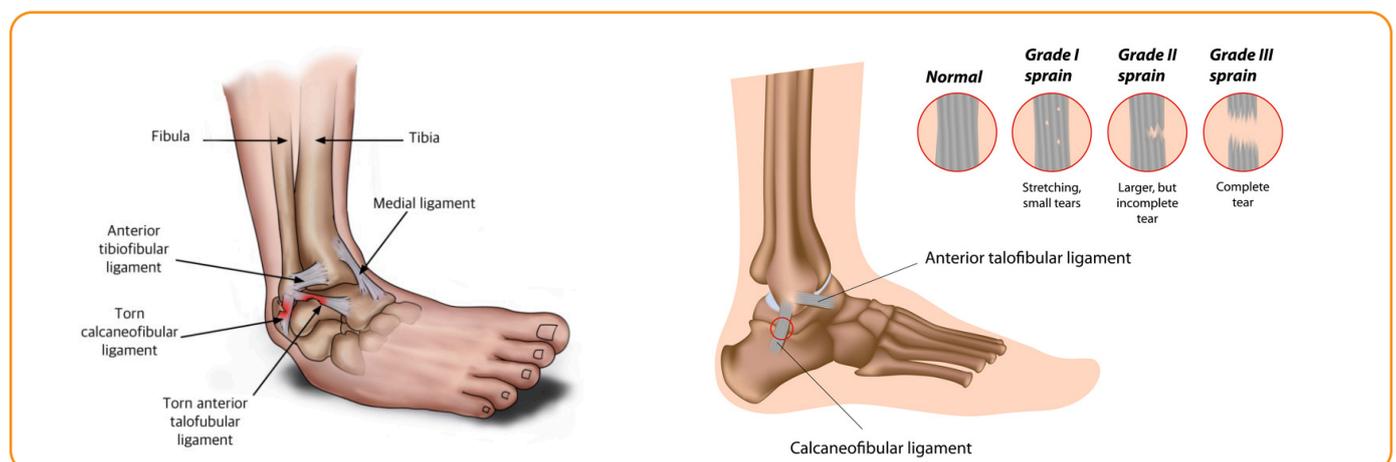
More than 80% of ankle sprains are caused by excessive inversion (when the sole of your foot faces inwards) damaging the outside (lateral aspect) of the ankle. This happens often when the Netball player props and changes direction, lands poorly or lands on the foot of another player.

Depending on the severity of the injury, one or all three of the lateral ligaments may be damaged. There is a system of grading the degree of ligament damage from 1-3. The higher the grade of injury, the longer the recovery time.

In extreme cases, an ankle sprain may include a bone fracture or bone injury.

A mild ankle sprain usually recovers within 2 weeks. More severe injuries take 6 -12 weeks to recover. After a severe ligament sprain, the ligament is never the same. It is stretched and heals with scar tissue. Wearing a brace or strapping tape creates a "fake ligament" that will help prevent the ankle moving into the extremes of movement that the ligament use to protect from. If you feel like your ankle is not improving it is important to see a medical professional for guidance.

When the ankle is sprained there is damage to the tiny nerve endings. These nerve endings are responsible for reflex speed, and helping the brain understand where the ankle is positioned (proprioception). It is important to re-train the nervous system. 50% of Netball players who sprain their ankle will re-sprain it within 24 months.



Why will Performing the NetballSmart Dynamic Warm Up help?

Research has shown sport-specific injury prevention programs are effective in preventing injuries. Like the NetballSmart Dynamic Warm up, these programs include components of balance, strength, landings and are called Neuromuscular Training (NMT).

NMT can also be called Neuromuscular conversation (NMC); nerves talking to muscles to control the body. NMT and NMC help prevent and rehabilitate ankle sprains.

Below are some exercises players can practise as well as some links to programmes they can complete.



RDL

Front knee slightly bent. Keep back straight. Lift back leg and tip upper body forward. Leg and upper body move as one. Control balance.

DO 8 EACH LEGS

Make it more difficult. Do it on a bosu ball.



Ball Throw

Ball throw in pairs. Move ball around waist and throw back. Stabilise trunk.

DO 8 EACH LEG

Vary pass: Overhead, chest, bounce pass.



Balance and Rotate

Balance on one leg with ball at chest. Rotate leg to one side and ball to the opposite side. Repeat in other direction.

DO 8 EACH LEG

Programmes

NetballSmart Dynamic Warm up

[Click Here](#)

Body Weight Strengthening

[Click Here](#)

Core Control and Stability

[Click Here](#)

Landing Skills

[Click Here](#)