What is it?

A sprained ankle is a stretched or torn ligament, which results in pain, swelling, and instability of the ankle.

What can you do? R.I.C.E.:

REST: Stay off your foot. Standing and walking will increase and prolong swelling.

ICE: Apply ice for 20 minutes at a time as often as possible. Ice will keep the swelling down. Change to heat when all of the following are true:

• you have full ankle motion
• you have no new swelling.
• the injured ankle feels the same temperature as the uninjured ankle.

It will take some people longer than others to get to the point of using heat. Do not use the clock or the calendar to decide when to stop ice, use the criteria listed instead.

APPLY HEAT for 20 minutes at a time as often as possible. Moist heat is most effective. Use warm wet towels or soak foot and ankle in warm water. If the foot or ankle swells with heat, discontinue heat and go back to using ice.

COMPRESSION: Wear an elastic bandage to help reduce swelling and to provide some ankle support. Always wrap from the toes up (against gravity). If your foot hurts with the bandage on, loosen or rewrap the elastic bandage. Remove the bandage at bedtime.

ELEVATION: Elevate your foot above the level of your hips whenever possible. This will reduce swelling.

TAKE IBUPROPHEN maximum every 6 hours, or ACETAMINOPHEN every 4 hours, for pain.

USE CRUTCHES until you can walk without ankle pain or limping. Crutches will keep your weight off your injured ankle.

RESUME REGULAR ACTIVITIES only when there is no longer any pain or limping. Begin running slowly and for short distances only when you can walk without pain or limping. Remember, sprains take time to heal, often 4-6 weeks.

Consult health care personnel:

• if there is little improvement after 7 days despite using the above measures.
• if swelling and bruising increase despite using the above measures.
• if pain has not decreased significantly with the above measures.
• anytime you are unsure of what to do.

Special instructions: