



Rehabilitation Exercises for Ankle, Foot and Lower Leg Injuries

Begin these exercises when your pain has decreased about 25% from the time when your injury was most painful.

Calf Stretch:

- A. Towel stretch: Sit on a hard surface with your legs stretched out in front of you. Loop a bath towel around the ball of your foot and gently pull the towel toward your body, keeping your knee straight. At the same time that you are pulling the towel towards you, contract your shin muscles (tibialis anterior). Hold for 3-5 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times then switch and repeat exercise on opposite foot. Repeat this exercise 3-5 times daily.



- B. Standing gastroc stretch: Facing a wall put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Step back into a lunge position, keeping the leg you are stretching straight and behind you. Turn that foot slightly outward and keep your heel on the floor. Slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch legs and repeat on the other side. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds for each calf. Repeat 5 times daily.



- C. Standing soleus stretch: Stand facing a wall with your hands at about chest level. With both knees slightly bent and the leg you are stretching slightly back, gently lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in your lower calf. Once again, angle your back foot slightly outward and keep your heel down on the floor. Hold for 30 seconds. Switch legs and repeat on the other side. Do 3 sets of 30 seconds for each calf. Repeat 5 times daily.



Active Range of Motion: Sitting with your legs straight and your knee toward the ceiling, move your ankle up and down, in and out, and in circles. Don't bend your knee while doing this. Repeat 20 times in each direction, 3 times a day. *You can also accomplish this by pretending to write each letter of the alphabet with your foot.



Anterior Compartment Stretch: Stand with one hand against a wall or chair for balance. Bend your knee and grasp the front of the foot on the injured side. Bend the front of the foot toward the heel. You should feel a stretch in the front of your shin. Hold for 10 seconds, repeat 10 times. Switch legs and repeat on the other side if needed.



Thera-Band Strengthening Exercises:

- A.** Resisted dorsiflexion: Sit in front of a doorway with your legs outstretched. Either have someone hold one end of the band for you during the exercises or if no one is available, anchor the band in a door by tying knots in the ends and closing the knots in the door. Next, loop the band around the forefoot of your injured leg. Pull your foot toward your face against the resistance of the band. Return slowly to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. Repeat on opposite side if necessary.



- B.** Resisted plantar flexion: Sitting with your legs outstretched, put the tubing around the ball of your foot of the injured leg and hold the ends of the tubing in your hands. Gently press your foot down stretching the band. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. Repeat on opposite side if needed.



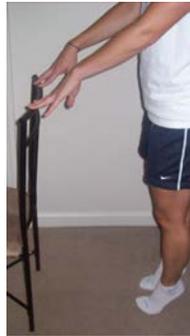
- C. Resisted inversion: Sit on the floor with your uninjured leg crossed over your injured ankle. Hold one end of the band in your hand and tie the other end in a loop. Place the loop around the forefoot of the injured leg and have the band wrapped around the uninjured foot to provide an anchor. Move your injured foot inward against the resistance of the band. Return your foot to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. Repeat on the other side if necessary.



- D. Resisted eversion: Sitting on the floor with both legs straight out, have the band looped around the balls of both feet. Slowly turn the injured foot outward, keeping the uninjured foot still. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. Repeat on other side if necessary.



Heel Raises: Balance yourself while standing behind a chair or counter. Raise your body up so you are standing on your toes, then slowly lower it. Repeat 10 times, do 2 sets of 10.



Toe Raises:

- A. Sitting: Sit on a firm surface with your feet flat on the floor. Keep your heel on the floor and raise your toes off the floor. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. *You may progress to the standing version of this exercise, when this one becomes easy.



- B. Standing: Standing with your feet flat on the floor, rock back onto your heels and lift your toes off the floor. Hold this for 5 seconds. Repeat 10 times, do 3 sets of 10.



Towel Curls: Sit in a chair and place a towel on the floor. Place your foot/toes on towel. Curl/pull the towel toward you with your toes while keeping your heel on the floor. Move the towel using your toes only – do not move your ankle or knee! Repeat exercise 10 times, do 3 sets of 10. Repeat on the other side if necessary.



Single Leg Balance: Attempt to balance on your injured leg while not letting the arch of that foot flatten. Don't curl your toes. Try to hold this position for 30 seconds, repeat at least 2 times daily. After this becomes easy, do it with your eyes closed. *A great way to do this exercise is to balance on your injured leg while brushing your teeth.

