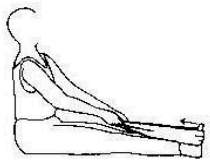
Megan R. Wolf, MD Sports Medicine/Foot & Ankle

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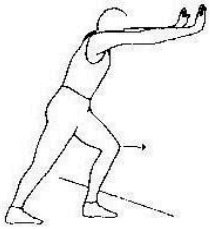
Ankle Sprain Rehabilitation Exercises

As soon as you can tolerate pressure on the ball of your foot, begin stretching your ankle using the towel stretch. When this stretch is too easy, try the standing calf stretch and soleus stretch. You can do exercises 4 and 5 when your ankle swelling has stopped increasing. You may do exercises 6 through 10 when you can stand on your injured ankle without pain.

1. Towel stretch: Sit on a hard surface with your injured leg stretched out in front of you. Loop a towel around the ball of your foot and pull the towel toward your body, keeping your knee straight. Hold this position for 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times.

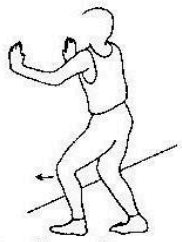


Towel stretch



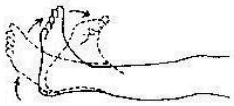
Standing calf stretch

2. Standing calf stretch: Facing a wall, put your hands against the wall at about eye level. Keep the injured leg back, the uninjured leg forward, and the heel of your injured leg on the floor. Turn your injured foot slightly inward (as if you were pigeontoed). Slowly lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in the back of your calf. Hold for 30 seconds. Do this several times a day.



Standing soleus stretch

3. Standing soleus stretch: Stand facing a wall with your hands at about chest level. With both knees slightly bent and the injured foot back, gently lean into the wall until you feel a stretch in your lower calf. Once again, angle the toes of your injured foot slightly inward and keep your heel down on the floor. Hold this for 30 seconds. Return to the starting position. Repeat 3 times.



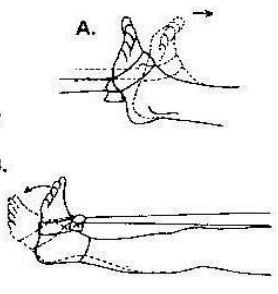
Ankle range of motion

4. Ankle range of motion: You can do this exercise sitting or lying down. Pretend you are writing each of the letters of the alphabet with your foot. This will move your ankle in all directions. Do this twice.

5. Thera-Band exercises

   A. Resisted dorsiflexion: Sitting with your leg out straight and your foot near a door, wrap the tubing around the ball of your foot. Anchor the other end of the tubing to the door by tying a knot in the tubing, slipping it between the door and the frame, and closing the door. Pull your toes toward your face. Return slowly to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.

   B. Resisted plantar flexion: Sitting with your leg outstretched, loop the middle section of the tubing around the ball of your foot. Hold the ends of the tubing in both hands. Gently press the ball of your foot down and point your toes, stretching the Thera-Band. Return to the starting position. Repeat 10 times. Do 3 sets of 10.



Theraband exercises