

Ankle Sprain First Aid: Damage Control: Goal is to Stop the Pain and Inflammation & Prevent Further Injury

When you roll your ankle, and suffer an ankle sprain, you get torn ligaments. All of that tissue damage creates pain and inflammation. The immediate goal of any ankle injury is to prevent any further damage to the injured ankle and stop the pain and swelling.

The easiest way to remember what you need to do when you sprain your ankle is to think of **P.R.I.C.E.**. P.R.I.C.E. stands for **Protection, Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation**. If you follow the P.R.I.C.E. system of ankle sprain treatment, you have the best chances of getting better and returning to activity quickly.

- **Protection:** Your ankle is injured and weak after a sprain. By definition a sprained ankle has torn ankle ligaments. The ankle ligaments keep the ankle stable. If they are torn, you are at high risk of another sprain. You have to protect the ankle in a brace or fracture walking boot. Anyone with a severe ankle sprain should be immobilized in a fracture walking boot for the first 5-7 days. This is the best way to prevent further injury and let the healing begin. If it is a mild sprain, a brace may be sufficient. Luckily for you it is rare that anyone needs crutches from a sprained ankle. If you see an ankle specialist, you will get the best treatment. Use the boot or ankle brace that Dr. Segler provided for you at your house call visit. Don't walk on the sprained ankle until your ankle doctor tells you its OK.
- **Rest:** Torn ligaments in the ankle need to be still to heal quickly. If you rest when you have a cold you will get better faster. If your ankle is injured and you rest, you will heal faster. Try to take it easy and rest as much as possible in the first 48 hours after a bad ankle sprain. If you have any questions about how much you should be doing, call Dr. Segler right away.
- **Ice:** Ice stops ankle inflammation, decreases ankle swelling, decrease ankle pain, and helps you recover from your ankle sprain as fast as possible. Studies show that the best way to apply ice to your ankle is for 10 minutes out of each waking hour. Use a damp washcloth wrapped around ice cubes or a ziploc bag filled with ice.
- **Compression:** Swelling can stretch the skin and soft tissues causing pain. Compression helps reduce ankle swelling. Use an ACE wrap, elastic ankle brace or compressive stockings to apply uniform pressure to the sprained ankle and reduce the swelling. By decreasing the swelling, your ankle will start to feel less painful. It will also heal faster if it is less swollen. Use the compressive dressing Dr. Segler gave you at your house call. Call your ankle doctor if you have any questions on how tight it should be applied, or how to wrap the ankle.
- **Elevation:** Elevating your leg will use gravity to help drain the inflammatory fluid and reduce swelling. To work best, your ankle should be elevated above your heart. Although it may feel awkward with your ankle elevated that high, it is very effective. Don't just prop it up on a chair. Prop it way up on a pile of pillows. Remember, swelling causes pain and prevents healing. Your ankle sprain will heal best if you reduce the swelling. It is most important to keep it elevated for the first 48 hours after the ankle sprain.

By following the PRICE routine, you can quickly stop all of the inflammation which can lead to delayed ligament healing, continued ankle pain, and a more painful ankle down the road.

If you have a sprained ankle and have any questions about your injury, you can call 415-308-0833 to speak directly to Dr. Segler. He is available for house calls and on-call 24/7 for his clients in the San Francisco Bay Area.

These instructions will outline the most effective ankle sprain first aid and the best treatment for an acute ankle sprain. Bear in mind that these instructions are intended to serve as a reminder for ankle sprains patients in the San Francisco Bay Area who have already been seen by Dr. Segler. These instructions should not be used alone and do not substitute for an emergency visit with an ankle doctor.