

PAIN AT THE FRONT OF THE ANKLE

Anterior Ankle Impingement Injuries

The more common areas of injury at the ankle are at the back in relation to the Achilles tendon or on the outside of the ankle in relation to an ankle sprain. A less common and sometimes an overlooked injury is anterior ankle impingement which causes pain at the front of the ankle. Anterior Ankle impingement usually occurs with a forceful movement of the foot upwards towards the shin, as occurs with landing from a jump, causing compression on the soft tissues in the front of the ankle.



The onset of an anterior ankle impingement could be from a single traumatic event such as rolling an ankle, or from a fast paced or forced forward movement of the leg over the foot such as in jumping. However, it usually develops as a chronic injury over time from the repetitive movement of the foot towards the ankle, and after subsequent ankle sprains. Specific repetitive activities such as excessive hill running, fast bowling, long jumping, and gymnastic landing can contribute to a longer term injury.

In the case of pre-injured ankles, it is possible that the base of the tibial bone, which is the shin bone, can have developed a form of spurring or 'lipping'. This change in shape of the bone will increase the pressure on any soft tissue as the ankle joint is narrowed through forward movement.

Some foot types can be more predisposed to anterior ankle impingement. For example, a higher arched foot with a reduced ankle range of motion will repetitively impact the leg bone with an underlying bone (the talus). A hypermobile foot type that collapses under load can also contribute to impingement of soft tissues.

Signs and symptoms of anterior ankle impingement

syndrome include pain at the front of the ankle, usually puffiness or mild swelling, and sometimes, if the joint capsule is impinged a distinct swelling is evident, called a ganglion cyst.

Treatment of anterior ankle impingement begins with anti-inflammatory treatment, in particular regular icing, reducing the activity that causes the pain, and heel lifts to open the ankle joint. If there has been no prior injury leading to the pain, a more thorough biomechanical analysis is recommended to determine if there is an anatomical or mechanical cause of the injury that will need to be treated with orthotics or footwear. Ankle strength activities can be prescribed at a later date once the pain has subsided.

There are other possible injuries that should be investigated and ruled out with anterior ankle impingement, particularly if the injury started after a traumatic event. These include a stress fracture or bone stress response at the base of the tibia and/or at the talus (see diagram above of the ankle); and osteochondral lesions, which is a crack in the cartilage through to the bone.

If you are experiencing running related injuries our team of podiatrists and physiotherapists can help you run away from your injury.

intraining Running Injury Clinic – Located at 33 Park Road, Milton and Level 3, Indooroopilly Shopping Centre Bookings and enquiries: ph. 07 3367 3088 or email clinic@intraining.com.au



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