Patient Information: Ankle Sprains

What are the types of ankle sprains that can occur?
- A low ankle sprain is an injury to the ligament on the outside of the ankle that connects to your foot
  - This is the most common type of ankle sprain
- A high ankle sprain is an injury to ligaments above the ankle joint
- Most ankle sprains are inversion injuries, where the outer edge of your foot rolls inward, under your leg
- A grade 1 sprain is mild stretching and tearing of ligaments
- A grade 2 sprain is partial tearing of ligaments
- A grade 3 sprain is complete tear of ligaments

What are the symptoms of an ankle sprain?
- Pain, swelling, instability, and tenderness to touch
- With low ankle sprains pain can radiate into the foot
- With high ankle sprains pain can radiate up the leg

How are ankle sprains diagnosed?
- An X-ray will be obtained to rule out a fracture of your ankle or the bones in your foot
- Your physician will examine the strength and stability of your ankle
- Musculoskeletal ultrasound can be used to evaluate the ligaments of your ankle
- In severe cases, or those that do not respond to treatment, an MRI may be ordered to evaluate soft tissue damage

How are ankle sprains treated?
- RICE is the primary treatment for all ankle sprains: Rest from weightbearing activities, ice regularly, compression wraps (possibly combined with a walking boot and/or crutches), and elevation to improve swelling
- After the initial pain and swelling improves, gentle exercises for strength, flexibility, and range of motion can be initiated- if this is tolerated, a gradual return to full activity can be initiated
- In rare, severe cases, surgery may be needed to repair torn ligaments

How can I prevent ankle sprains?
- Wear activity-appropriate, supportive footwear
- Avoid or exercise with caution on uneven or poorly maintained surfaces
- Warm up and stretch prior to activity, and do not exercise past the point of fatigue
- Integrate “foot core” training into your regular exercise routine- see below

Where can I learn more about ankle sprains?
- Foot core exercises: http://running.competitor.com/2015/08/training/how-runners-can-improve-foot-strength_134271

To schedule an appointment, visit the Steward St. Elizabeth’s Sports Medicine website at: semc.org/services-directory/orthopedics/sportsmedicine

Adapted from: American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (www.aaos.org), Hospital for Special Surgery (www.hss.edu), Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org) This information is for patient reference only. It is not intended to diagnose or guide treatment without evaluation by a physician.