

Ankle Fracture

Introduction

Ankle injury is one of the most common bone and joint injury. Usually, the patient suffers from pain, ankle swelling and inability to walk. Apart from “ankle sprain”, the bones around the ankle may be broken which may require an operation.

The ankle joint is made up of 3 bones coming together which include the tibia, fibula and talus. Tibia is the main bone of the lower leg, which makes up the medial or inner side of the ankle. Fibular is a smaller bone that parallels the tibia and make up the lateral side of the ankle. The tibia and fibula form a mortise which sits on the “talus”. These 3 bones make up the bony elements of the ankle joint.

Symptoms

After twisting the ankle, pain is the most common symptom which the pain may come directly from the area of fracture. The pain may stop you from walking. After the acute injury, swelling frequently occurs around the ankle which may be caused by soft tissue damage and bleeding from the fracture site. The bruise may arise later and track down toward the sole of your foot and toward the toes. In severe fracture, there may be obvious deformity, the skin may be stretched.

Diagnosis

Your orthopaedic surgeon will seek a history of the injury and your symptoms. Then, the doctor will perform a physical examination to look for the bruise, swelling, painful site and assess the soft tissue condition. X-ray may be taken if ankle fracture is suspected which most of the fracture can be seen in the radiograph. For some special condition, CT scan may be arranged for operative planning.

Treatment

After the ankle injury, one should stay off the injured ankle so it would not be further injured. The ankle should be elevated to help decrease swelling and pain. We can apply cold packs to the injured area to decrease swelling and pain. Do remember not to apply ice directly. After taking the x-ray, the fracture can be well delineated. Your orthopaedic surgeon will usually put on a slab or splint as the initial immobilization till the swelling improved. The type of fracture and stability of the joint will determine the type of treatment required. For those mal-aligned and grossly displaced fractures, an operation may be required for reduction and fixation. After the fixation of fracture, a period of protected walking and rehabilitation may be required.