

VIBEMOTION LABS · ATHLETE RECOVERY

SPECIFIC INJURY PROGRAMME

Ankle Sprain

Recovery Programme

Free

Comprehensive programme for Grade I, II, and III lateral ankle sprains — the most common sports injury. Covers acute management, strength restoration, balance and proprioception training, and a full return to sport with long-term prevention to stop the 70% recurrence rate.

RECOVERY TIMELINE

PHASE	TIMELINE	FOCUS	GOAL
Phase 1	Days 0–7	PEACE & LOVE, gentle ROM	Walk without significant pain
Phase 2	Weeks 1–3	Strength, balance basics	Single-leg balance 30 sec
Phase 3	Weeks 3–6	Progressive load, proprioception	Single-leg squat 10 reps
Phase 4	Weeks 5–10	Plyometrics, running, agility	Hop tests pain-free
Phase 5	Month 3+	Full sport return	Full clearance + taping/bracing plan

SAFETY RULES

1. Do NOT use anti-inflammatory medication in the first 72 hours — early inflammation is part of healing.
2. GRADE III ankle sprain (complete ligament rupture): always seek assessment before beginning this programme.
3. If you are unable to bear any weight at all, or bone pain is present — get an X-ray to exclude fracture.
4. Ankle sprains that are not fully rehabilitated result in chronic instability — complete every phase.
5. 70% of ankle sprains re-occur. This programme is specifically designed to break that cycle.

PHASE 1

Acute Management — PEACE and LOVE

Timeline: Days 0–7 · Goal: Control swelling, maintain pain-free ROM, begin weight bearing

01 Ankle Alphabet

ROM /
Proprioception /
Neural Activation

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	Full A–Z (capital letters)	Bodyweight	Slow, deliberate letters	30 sec between rounds

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Sit in a chair with the injured ankle off the ground.
2. Using only your ankle joint — not your knee or hip — trace each letter of the alphabet in the air.
3. Make the letters as large as comfortable — aim to use your full available range.
4. Capital letters only. Write each one slowly and deliberately.
5. After completing the alphabet, rest 30 seconds and repeat.
6. Each session try to make the letters slightly larger — this tracks your improving ROM.
7. Begin on day 1 or 2 — this exercise is safe and beneficial from the earliest stage.

COACHING CUES

- *Slow, conscious movement is both mobility work AND proprioception training.*
- *Focus on feeling the ankle position throughout — this restores joint position sense.*
- *Note which letters feel most restricted — they reveal which directional ranges need most work.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When full alphabet is pain-free and letters are large and fluid — advance to resistance work.

02 Calf Raises (Bilateral)

Calf / Soleus /
Ankle Stability

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	20 reps	Bodyweight → progress to single-leg	2 up / 1 hold / 3 lower	45 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart. Use a wall or chair for light balance support if needed.
2. Press through the balls of both feet and slowly raise both heels.
3. Pause at the top for 1 second — feel the calf contract firmly.
4. Lower slowly over 3 seconds — resist gravity on the way down.

5. Do not let heels drop suddenly — control every millimetre of the descent.
6. Progress: reduce wall support → no support → single-leg (injured side only).

COACHING CUES

- *The 3-second lower is where most of the strengthening occurs — do not rush it.*
- *Even bilateral calf raises with good control will begin loading the ligament support system.*
- *Progress to single-leg as soon as bilateral is pain-free — the injured side needs more attention.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3×20 single-leg on injured side is pain-free — add load (hold dumbbell).

PHASE 2

Strength Foundations and Balance

Timeline: Weeks 1–3 · Goal: Calf strength, basic balance, resistance band work

03 Resistance Band — All 4 Directions

Ankle Strength
360°

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	15 reps each direction	Light resistance band	Controlled throughout	45 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Sit on the floor with injured leg extended. Loop a resistance band around the ball of your foot.
2. Direction 1 — Dorsiflexion: anchor band in front of you. Pull foot toward shin against resistance.
3. Direction 2 — Plantarflexion: anchor band behind you. Point foot away against resistance.
4. Direction 3 — Inversion: anchor band to the outside. Pull foot inward against resistance.
5. Direction 4 — Eversion: anchor band to the inside. Push foot outward against resistance.
6. Complete all 4 directions as one set. Rest between sets.
7. All motions should originate at the ankle — not the knee or hip.

COACHING CUES

- *Eversion strength (pushing foot outward) is the most important direction — it supports the sprained ligament.*
- *Keep the heel on the floor — only the forefoot moves.*
- *Progress from light to medium band over weeks 2–3.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When all 4 directions with medium band are pain-free — begin standing balance work.

04 Single-Leg Balance Progression

Proprioception /
Ankle Stability

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	30–60 sec per stage	Bodyweight	Static hold — progressive stages	30 sec between stages

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Stage 1: Stand on injured leg on flat, firm floor. Soft knee — not locked. Hold 30 seconds.
2. Stage 2: Same as Stage 1 but close your eyes. Hold 30 seconds.
3. Stage 3: Stand on a folded exercise mat or foam pad. Eyes open. Hold 30 seconds.
4. Stage 4: Foam pad with eyes closed. Hold 30 seconds.

5. Stage 5: Balance board or BOSU ball. Eyes open. Hold 30 seconds.
6. Spend at least 3 sessions on each stage before advancing.
7. Build from 30 seconds to 60 seconds at each stage before progressing.

COACHING CUES

- *Wobbling is good — it means the stabilisers are working. Being completely still means the ankle is not learning.*
- *Focus on feeling the ground through the ball and heel of your foot — this restores position sense.*
- *Stage 4 and 5 have been shown to reduce recurrence rate significantly — do not skip them.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3x60 sec on BOSU ball with eyes closed has minimal sway — begin phase 3 loading.

PHASE 3

Progressive Load and Advanced Proprioception

Timeline: Weeks 3–6 · Goal: Single-leg squat, hop and stick, cutting at 45°

05 Single-Leg Squat

Ankle / Knee / Hip Chain Integration

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	10 reps per leg	Bodyweight → 10 lb dumbbell	3 sec down / 1 hold / 2 up	75 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Stand on the injured leg. Use fingertip wall contact for initial balance.
2. Slowly lower into a single-leg squat — aim for 60° in week 3, 90° by week 6.
3. Keep the knee tracking over the second toe.
4. Hold at the bottom for 1 second.
5. Drive back to standing.
6. The ankle, knee, and hip must all work together in this movement — this is full kinetic chain rehab.

COACHING CUES

- Watch for ankle rolling inward (pronation) at the bottom — strengthen the peroneals if this occurs.
- Compare depth and control between both legs every session.
- Remove wall support as soon as balance allows.

PROGRESS WHEN

When 3x10 at 90° depth is pain-free and controlled — begin plyometric work.

PHASE 4

Plyometrics, Running, and Agility

Timeline: Weeks 5–10 · Goal: Hop tests pain-free, change of direction, sprint at 75%+

06 Lateral Hop and Stick Progression

Lateral Power /
Ankle Stability
Under Load

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
3	8 reps per side	Bodyweight	Max effort hop / stick 3 sec	90 sec

HOW TO PERFORM

1. Stand on the injured leg. Mark a line on the floor beside you.
2. Hop laterally over the line to land on the same foot.
3. Absorb the landing on a bent knee — stick completely still for 3 seconds.
4. Hop back to the starting side. Each landing = 1 rep.
5. Progress: increase hop distance over weeks 5–8.
6. Final progression: reactive lateral hops — partner calls 'left' or 'right' and you react.
7. LSI testing: compare hop distance between both ankles — target $\geq 90\%$ symmetry.

COACHING CUES

- *Every landing is a stability test — note which landings feel uncertain vs. controlled.*
- *Your ankle should feel confident and stable. Any giving way means return to phase 3.*
- *The reactive version is the final preparation before sport return — unpredictable demands.*

PROGRESS WHEN

When LSI $\geq 90\%$ for 3 consecutive sessions — progress to full sprint and cutting.

PHASE 5

Return to Elite Performance and Prevention

Timeline: Month 3+ · Goal: Full unrestricted sport with permanent prevention

07 Ankle Sprain Prevention Programme

Recurrence
Prevention —
Permanent

SETS	REPS/TIME	LOAD	TEMPO	REST
2x per week permanently	Ongoing	Various	As prescribed	As prescribed

HOW TO PERFORM

1. This programme reduces re-injury risk by up to 50% — do not stop after returning to sport.
2. Single-leg balance on unstable surface: 2x45 sec per side before every training session.
3. Lateral band walk: 2x20 steps each direction — every warm-up.
4. Calf raises (single-leg): 3x15 with load — 2x per week.
5. Peroneal strengthening (band eversion): 2x15 per side — 2x per week.
6. Ankle taping or bracing: recommended for all high-risk sport until 12 months post-injury.
7. If you roll the ankle again — immediately return to Phase 1 for a minimum of 3 days before resuming training.

COACHING CUES

- 70% of ankle sprains recur because athletes return to sport without completing proprioception training.
- Taping or bracing does not replace strength — it is a supplement during the first full season back.
- A 5-minute warm-up routine is your most powerful prevention tool.

PROGRESS WHEN

This programme continues permanently.

RETURN TO SPORT — FINAL CLEARANCE CHECKLIST

- Walking and jogging pain-free for 3+ consecutive weeks
- Single-leg balance on BOSU ball: 3x45 sec with minimal sway
- Lateral hop and stick: LSI \geq 90% for 2 consecutive test sessions
- Single-leg calf raise: matched reps to uninjured side to fatigue
- Running at 80%+ with change of direction — pain-free
- Ankle taping or bracing plan in place for first season back
- Clearance from physiotherapist or sports medicine physician
- Prevention programme integrated into weekly warm-up routine