

Ankle Sprain Recovery Phase III: Restore Ankle Stability

Goal is to Restore Ankle Proprioception

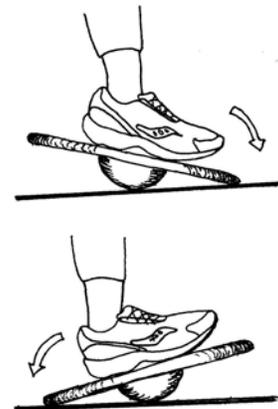
After you have strengthened the ankle with the Phase II exercises, you will move on to the most critical stage of ankle sprain recovery. These exercises will train your brain to compensate for the injured, stretched and torn ankle ligaments.

If you do your best and are diligent about this phase of your ankle sprain recovery, you will be able to heal the sprain. The idea is that you must train the muscles and tendons around the ankle to provide the stability that was once provided by the ligaments that were injured when you rolled the ankle.

Without this sort of ankle “proprioceptive training” you will be at high risk of another ankle sprain, ankle fracture, or painful ankle arthritis. However, if you perform these exercises, you will develop a strong stable ankle. Then it will be safe to return to activities that might be risky for an ankle sprain (such as trail running, hiking, basketball, and tennis).

You should be able to these exercises without any pain. Work up gradually to the more difficult exercises: you don't want to move too quickly as this might cause another ankle sprain. If you have any pain or questions when performing any of these ankle proprioception exercises, STOP IMMEDIATELY and call Dr. Segler.

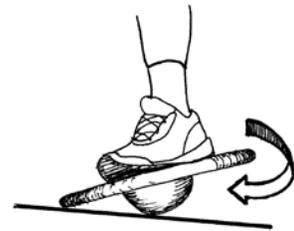
- **Dorsiflexion/Plantarflexion Wobble Board Exercise:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Place your healing ankle on the wobble board. Hold onto a chair or counter for support. Slowly press your foot down until the board hits the floor (as if you were pressing the gas pedal in your car). Don't let the board wobble from side-to-side. Now, slowly tilt the board all the way back until the back of the board hits the floor. It should take you to a count of 3 seconds to tilt from one side to the other. Do this in a slow, controlled motion. Don't let the board wobble from side-to-side. Repeat 30 times. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times per day.



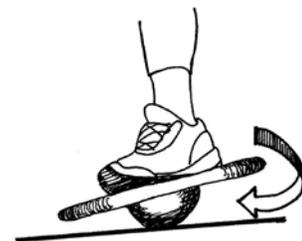
- **Inversion/Eversion Wobble Board Exercise:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Place your healing ankle on the wobble board. Hold onto a chair or counter for support. Slowly press the outside of your foot down until the board hits the floor. Don't let the board wobble from front-to-back. Now, slowly tilt the board all the way over toward the inside of your foot until the other edge of the wobble board hits the floor. It should take you to a count of 3 seconds to tilt from one side to other. Do this in a slow, controlled motion. Don't let the board wobble from front-to-back. Repeat 30 times. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times per day.



- **Wobble On-the-Ground:** Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Place your healing ankle on the wobble board. Hold onto a chair or counter for support. Move the board down so **one edge of the board touches the floor**. Slowly rotate your ankle clockwise, making a **full circle while keeping the edge of the board in contact with the floor**. Now rotate the ankle counterclockwise making a full circle while keeping the edge of the board in contact with the floor. Repeat 30 circles in each direction. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times per day.



- **Wobble Off-the-Ground:** Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Place your healing ankle on the wobble board. Hold onto a chair or counter for support. Move the board down so one edge of the board **comes close to the floor, but does not touch the floor**. Slowly rotate your ankle clockwise, making a full circle while keeping the edge of the board close to the floor, but not touching the floor. Now reverse and rotate the ankle counterclockwise making a full circle while keeping the edge of the board close to the floor, but not touching the floor. Repeat 30 circles in each direction. Repeat this exercise 2-3 times per day.



Advanced Proprioception Exercises

Single Leg Wobble Exercises

If your ankle is strong enough to perform these exercises without much effort, you can try repeating them while standing on only one leg. This is *much* more difficult. You must stand with your hands lightly holding onto a counter for support. Don't try this until you have been cleared by your podiatrist/ankle surgeon. Call Dr. Segler to discuss before you attempt this.

Eyes Closed, Single Leg Wobble Exercises

If your ankle is strong enough to perform the single leg exercises without much effort, you can try repeating them while standing on only one leg with your eyes closed. You must stand with your hands lightly holding onto a counter for support. This is extremely difficult for most athletes. Don't try this until you have been cleared by your podiatrist/ankle surgeon. Attempting these exercises too early can put you at risk for re-injury or another ankle sprain. Call Dr. Segler to discuss before you attempt this.

Once you can perform the wobble board routines on one leg with your eyes closed, you can feel confident that you have fully recovered from the ankle sprain. Then you have successfully retrained your brain to use the ankle supporting muscles to compensate for the sprained ankle ligaments. When you have reached this stage, you should call Dr. Segler to discuss your desired return to athletic activity. If you have any questions about your ankle rehabilitation you can always reach Dr. Segler directly at 415-308-0833.