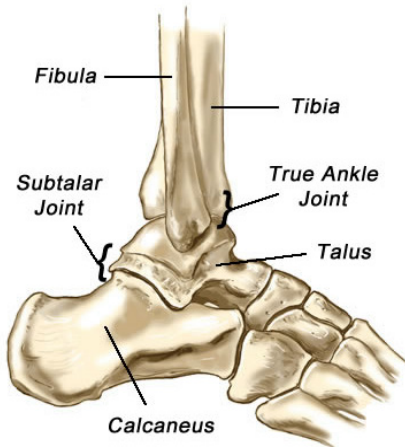


# ANKLE FRACTURE

A broken ankle is also known as an ankle fracture. Any one of the three bones that make up the ankle joint may be fractured. There are varying degrees of ankle fracture. Some fractures require surgery, others do not. Broken ankles affect people of all ages. Over the past 30 to 40 years doctors have noted an increase in the number and severity of broken ankles, due in part to an active, older population of Baby Boomers.

## Anatomy



The three bones that comprise the ankle joint are the Tibia, Fibula and Talus. There are also tendons and ligaments which may also be injured. Doctors classify ankle fractures according to the area that is broken. For example, a fracture

at the end of the fibula is called a lateral malleolus fracture. If both the tibia and fibula are broken, it is called a bimalleolar fracture.

## Causes

Trauma, twisting, tripping, falling and rolling your ankle are common mechanisms of injury to the ankle.

## Provider evaluation

Detailed history and physical exam along with imaging.

- X-rays are the most common diagnostic study. X-rays can demonstrate whether the bone is broken and if there is displacement (a gap between broken bones).
- CT scan - useful for complex fractures and joint injuries
- MRI - useful for evaluation of the ankle ligaments

## Treatment

Surgical versus nonsurgical treatment is often dictated by the stability of a fracture. Stable fractures often do not require surgery, while unstable fractures do.

Nonsurgical treatment can include casting, bracing and non weight bearing. Some fractures may require 6 weeks of non weight bearing, while others may allow weight bearing right away. This depends on the location of the fracture as well as the stability.

Surgery may be indicated for an unstable ankle fracture. It involves repositioning the bone into the appropriate position, and holding the bone in place with pins, screws and plates. Weight bearing is usually limited after surgery.

Fractures require follow up X-rays to monitor for bone healing. Your doctor will determine your weight bearing and progression of activity based upon the healing status of the fracture. Physical therapy may be helpful for getting motion and strength back after a fracture has healed. It is not uncommon to experience swelling, a limp, weakness and balance problems after an ankle fracture. Swelling may persist for six to 12 months.

## Complications

- Nonunion-bone fails to heal properly. Tobacco abuse is a significant risk factor for delayed healing of both wounds and fractures.
- Arthritis is damage to cartilage in the joint
- Occasionally, hardware from surgery may cause ongoing pain and may require removal once healed at a later date. This is typically due to pain with shoe wear.

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