SUMMARY

Rehabilitation for ankle instability includes:

1. Stretching tight muscles
2. Strengthening the muscles that turn your foot outwards.
3. Improving your balance.

As from January 2006, everyone has the choice of where to receive their treatment and, if you wish, you can choose The Southampton University Hospitals. We would be pleased to treat you promptly in a safe environment renowned for its clinical excellence.

This leaflet is intended for general information only. For individual advice please contact your doctor.
What is Ankle Instability?
When your ankle feels like it is ‘giving way’ on you. This can happen during standing, walking, or when playing sports.

You may often complain of:
- Turning in of the ankle especially on uneven ground.
- Swelling
- Pain or tenderness

Why have I got Ankle Instability?
It usually develops after an ankle sprain. When you sprain your ankle some of the connective tissue (ligaments) of your ankle are stretched and some fibres may have torn. These ligaments support the ankle and help with your balance. This means after an ankle sprain your ankle is weaker and your balance is reduced. Without rehabilitation the ankle is at risk of spraining again. The more sprains you have the weaker and more stretched the ligaments become, resulting in instability.

What can I do?
Firstly you will see a doctor who will examine your ankle looking for tender areas, swelling and instability. X-rays, MRI and CT scans may be helpful for further examination.

The doctor may then refer you to physiotherapy for rehabilitation. Rehabilitation will strengthen the ankle and retrain your balance giving the ankle the support it needs.

With this leaflet you can start your rehabilitation straight away with these simple exercises.

2. Strengthen your muscles
With ankle instability your ankle will want to turn inwards, to stop this we need to make the muscles that turn your foot outwards stronger. Sit on the floor with your legs out straight, turn your feet so the soles of your feet face each other (this is inwards) then turn the soles of your feet away from each other (this is outwards). Practise moving your feet outwards 20 times 3 times a day.

3. Retrain your Balance
By retraining your balance you can support the ankle and reduce instability. Here are some ideas:
- Balance on one leg—compare right to left, is there a difference?
- Try balancing on one leg then closing your eyes
- Throw and catch a ball balancing on one leg.
- Walk as if on a tight rope forwards and backwards.
- Try walking on your heels or on your toes.
Spend 5 minutes a day doing balance activities.