

The Ankle

The ankle is a complex joint. What most people think of as the ankle is actually made up of two joints: the true ankle joint and the subtalar joint. The true ankle joint is composed of 3 bones: looking from the front is the tibia which forms the inside, or medial, portion of the ankle; the fibula which forms the lateral, or outside portion of the ankle; and the talus underneath as the mobile 'ankle bone'. The true ankle joint is responsible for up and down motion of the foot.

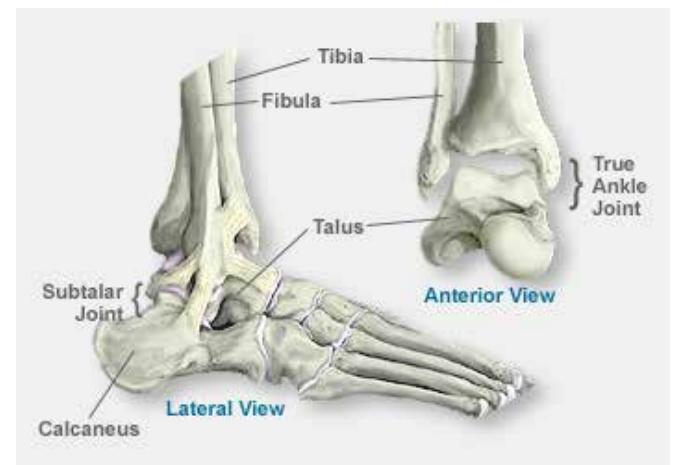
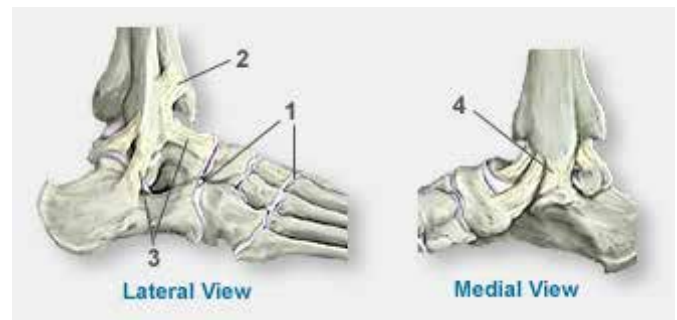
Beneath the true ankle joint is the second part of the ankle, the subtalar joint, which consists of the talus on top and calcaneus on the bottom. The subtalar joint allows side-to-side motion of the heel bone and foot.

The ends of the bones in these joints are covered by articular cartilage – this is the gliding surface of the joint that allows smooth pain free movement of the bones.

The major ligaments of the ankle are: the anterior (and posterior) tibiofibular ligament ('Syndesmosis'), which stabilises the tibia to the fibula; the lateral collateral ligaments (3), which attach the fibula to the calcaneus and talus and gives the ankle lateral stability; and, on the medial side of the ankle, the deltoid (or medial) ligaments (4), which connect the tibia to the talus and calcaneus and provide medial stability.

These components of your ankle, along with the muscles and tendons of your lower leg, work together to handle the stress your ankle receives as you walk, run and jump.

Common problems around the ankle including ankle sprain injuries with damage to the lateral ligaments and sometimes cartilage injuries (osteochondral injury/ lesion), ankle bone spurs, ankle arthritis, tendon injuries such as Achilles tears/ damage or the tibialis posterior tendon (common cause of painful acquired flatfoot in adults).



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