

POSTERIOR ANKLE IMPINGEMENT

Posterior Ankle Impingement can be described as a condition where compression of the bone or soft tissue structures at the back of the ankle cause pain. This is usually during activities that involve maximal ankle plantar flexion. It is very common in dancers, particularly those en pointe, and is often misdiagnosed as Achilles Tendinopathy.

What Causes It?

Posterior Ankle Impingement can be caused by many factors. It often follows an ankle sprain where the motor control and calf strength has been affected, but can also be caused by a significant increase in load.

A change to your rehearsal load, going back to dance after a holiday, or increasing your training for a particular performance are all risk factors to developing posterior ankle impingement.

In most cases, the impingement is functional and it is the soft tissue at the back of the ankle that is inflamed. However, in some cases a secondary ossification centre forms at the back of the ankle laying down more bone in response to increased loading. This is known as an Os Trigonum. It is important to note that an Os Trigonum can be a normal anatomical variant and dancers can have one without symptoms. It is only when there is increased load placed through the back of the ankle that they become an issue.

What Can You Do?

Posterior Ankle Impingement can be diagnosed by a Physiotherapist using a thorough subjective and objective assessment. Occasionally further scans, such as X-ray or MRI will be needed to give a complete diagnosis.

Physiotherapy can help by identifying the contributing underlying biomechanics and creating a comprehensive rehabilitation program focused on building strength and control around the foot and ankle. Manual therapy can also assist in improving the mobility of the ankle joint and help decrease pain.

If you think you may be suffering from Posterior Ankle Impingement or would like more information on what you can do to help it, please contact Encore Performance Health via email, encoreperformancehealth@gmail.com.

Other names for this condition include:

- Ankle Impingement
- Posterior Impingement Syndrome
- Posterior Impingement of the Ankle
- Os Trigonum Syndrome (bony block)