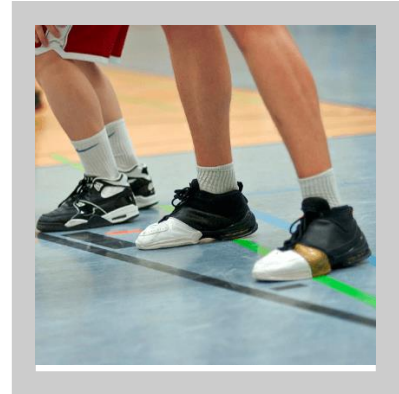


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## Taping and Bracing

Basketball players are more likely than any other sports players to injure their ankles. The most common ankle injuries among basketball players are inversion (turning inward) and eversion (turning outward) of the ankle. There are many factors that make basketball players especially prone to ankle injuries. The sharp twists, frequent running, constant jumping, and sudden stopping associated with basketball put tremendous pressure on a player's ankle joint. The ligaments within that joint can only withstand so much force before tearing. Although there are several ways that players and trainers try to treat and prevent these injuries, there has yet to be a completely successful solution. Taping is the traditional method used by athletic trainers to treat ankle injuries. In this method, ankle tape is simply wrapped snugly around the ankle joint.



Taping can be beneficial, but it also has many drawbacks. It is criticized by athletic trainers and players alike. Taping is not very expensive when used once, but when used throughout the season, taping is three times more costly than bracing. This is due to the fact that tape must be reapplied for each practice and game, causing it to become very expensive over time. Taping also loosens with physical activity; after only ten minutes of exercise, the tape will become 50% looser. After one hour of exercise, taping offers no significant support whatsoever.

Bracing has proven to be more effective than taping in a number of different studies. It is also much more cost effective throughout a season. Several types of ankle braces are available for use, ranging from cloth lace-on braces to more rigid plastic braces. Braces decrease the range of motion of the ankle more than taping does, and, therefore, help to prevent future ankle injuries. However, despite the numerous benefits of ankle braces over ankle tape, bracing is still not a frequent practice for athletes. Although braces are easily applied and maintained, the attitude towards braces is fairly negative. Braces are believed to overly restrict movement capabilities and also cause discomfort.

Both taping and bracing are typically only used after a player has already been injured. One of the most common attempts to prevent ankle injuries in the first place is simply using a high-top shoe rather than a low-top shoe. Researchers have found that shoe height *does not* improve resistance to eversion moments, but *does* significantly increase resistance to inversion moments. But while high-top shoes may help protect players, players shouldn't spend a great deal of money on their shoes. Recent research has also shown that more expensive shoes often cause more ankle injuries than cheaper shoes. The air cells within the expensive shoes are thought to be responsible for this.