

Ultra Ankle Zoom vs. Lace-Up Ankle Braces

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Some sports have a very high incidence of ankle injuries, so coaches and athletic trainers often times will require athletes to wear an ankle brace to help prevent the ankle injury. Yes, ankle braces can prevent some ankle injuries, however, they are really designed to lessen the severity should an injury occur. Wearing an ankle brace could be the difference in getting a grade 1 ankle sprain and missing two days of activity instead of getting a grade 2 ankle sprain and missing three weeks of activity.

In this blog, I will compare two very popular ankle braces designed to help prevent the ankle injury, the Ultra Zoom by Ultra Ankle and the lace-up (tie-up) style ankle support available from many companies. There are a few major differences between these two ankle brace designs which cause them to fit and function dramatically different.

Lace-Up Ankle Braces

The lace-up ankle brace was first introduced in 1887 as a corset for the ankle. In the 1990's lace-up style ankle braces were made popular as a reusable tape-job that the athlete can apply themselves. The lace-up ankle brace is made of cloth and is designed to lace-up around the ankle to help prevent the ankle from excessively turning inward which is the classic low ankle sprain. Usually there are straps attached to the lace-up that wrap around the ankle in a figure-8 design. Due to their corset design, lace-up ankle braces resist all ankle range of motion, including non-injury up and down ankle motion. Any brace that resists all joint motion will lose support rapidly, especially if worn by an athlete.

The next logical question might be *"if a lace-up resists normal ankle range of motion, how does that affect performance?"* A recent university study concluded that lace-ups "significantly decreased ankle joint range of motion and isokinetic measures of muscle torque, total work, and power." To clarify, the lace-up brace negatively affects ankle range of motion and strength.

Ultra Zoom® Ankle Braces

Unlike tie-up ankle supports, the Ultra Zoom has a hinged-cuff design that allows the brace to move with the ankle, not against it. The hinged-cuff design allows the straps to stay securely in place maintaining longer lasting ankle support similar to the design of modern knee braces. Since the ankle brace moves with the joint there is no negative impact on performance, especially vertical jump.

The hinged-cuff design encircles the posterior portion of the lower leg, helping to restrict excessive ankle turning and twisting which causes both low and high ankle sprains. Another unique feature to the Ultra Zoom is the introduction of the first Performathane flexible soft shell. This brace is not made of a rigid plastic like other hinged ankle braces, but is made of a flexible shell that uses body heat to custom-fit to the ankle making it incredibly comfortable to wear for extended periods of time. Ankle braces featuring a Performathane shell will never crack, break or tear offering multi-season durability.

Quick Comparison: Lace-up vs. Ultra Zoom Ankle Braces

Brace Design

- Lace-Up: Corset
- Ultra Zoom: Hinged-cuff with Performathane® soft shell

Injury Protection

- Lace-Up: Helps prevent low ankle injuries.
- Ultra Zoom: Helps prevent low and high ankle injuries.

Shell Material

- Lace-Up: Fabric with laces and straps
- Ultra Zoom: Flexible Performathane® soft shell

Retail Price

- Ultra Zoom: \$58.95

<https://www.ultraankle.com/product/ultra-zoom>