

Understanding Your Foot or Ankle Surgery



My Condition: _____

Planned Procedure: _____

Your foot and ankle surgeon has recommended surgery as the best treatment for your foot or ankle condition. Surgery becomes an option when conservative (non-surgical) methods have not adequately provided relief of pain, improvement of function or correction of a deformity. Surgery may also be undertaken as a preventive measure to keep some conditions from worsening.

This information sheet is designed to help you understand the surgery that has been recommended for your condition. It describes what you need to do before and after your procedure to obtain the best results.

Weighing the Risks and Benefits of Surgery

The major benefits of foot or ankle surgery are decreased pain and improved function. In some cases, surgery is also beneficial as a means to keep a condition from getting worse or causing other problems in the future.

As is true in all areas of surgery, any surgical procedure carries risks. The possible risks of foot and ankle surgery include, but are not limited to:

- Infection, possibly leading to antibiotic therapy and/or hospitalization or further surgery
- Loss of blood
- Damage to nerves, arteries, and veins in the surgical area
- Numbness
- Failure of bones to heal (non-union)
- Bone healing in an imperfect position (malunion)
- Failure of incision to heal

- Incomplete correction of the problem
- Painful scars
- Continued pain, especially when wearing shoes or walking
- Recurrence of the condition
- Need for additional surgery
- Gangrene and loss of the toes, foot, or leg
- Deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism
- Risks associated with anesthesia (to be explained by the anesthesiologist)
- Stroke or heart attack
- Possible death

Preparing for Your Surgery

Medical Evaluation

You may need to obtain an additional medical evaluation to undergo surgery based on your medical status.

Your current medications and supplements.

What medications and supplements are you currently taking? This includes any prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and vitamins, minerals, and other supplements. You may be advised to stop taking some or all of these prior to surgery, as noted below.

Before surgery, stop taking: _____

Allergies

Are you allergic to any medications? Are you allergic to latex?

Stop smoking

If you are a smoker, this is the perfect time to give up the habit. In addition to decreasing breathing capacity and causing other harmful effects, smoking constricts the blood vessels and therefore delays wound and bone healing after surgery, and increases your risk of infection.

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Feeling sick prior to your scheduled procedure

Inform our office if you become ill before your scheduled procedure—even if it's just a cold or the flu.

Pain management

You will receive a prescription to help manage your post-operative pain.

Activity Restrictions After Surgery

To help you plan ahead, here's what you can expect regarding activity restrictions after the surgery:

Supplies you may need

Be sure to have these supplies on hand following your surgery:

- Ice bag
- Crutches/walker/knee roller/wheel chair/cane
- Water-resistant cast/bandage protectors

Other: _____

Here are some common questions that you may want to ask before scheduling your surgery:

- What kind of anesthesia will I have?
- How much pain will I have?
- Will my surgery require a hospital stay?
- How long will I need to take off from work?
- When can I drive again?

Other? _____

At-Home Preparation

You should take the following steps prior to your scheduled surgery:

Food and drink restrictions. Unless otherwise instructed, no food or drink will be permitted after midnight the night before your surgery.

Nail polish removal. Be sure to remove all nail polish from your toes.

Living Will and other legal documents. The hospital staff may request that you bring on the day of surgery any advanced directives you may have, such as a Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney.

Prepare your home. While you are recovering from surgery, your living quarters will ideally be on the first floor to avoid using stairs. For safety purposes, make sure that throw rugs, foot stools, electric cords, and other items are kept out the way to prevent tripping. Have extra pillows handy to prop up your leg. Also, arrange for help with household responsibilities.

Additional details from the hospital. The hospital will phone you 24 hours prior to your surgery to provide additional details.

Caregivers. Arrange for someone to drive you home and someone to stay with you overnight immediately following your procedure.

After Your Surgery

Once you return home, follow these instructions carefully:

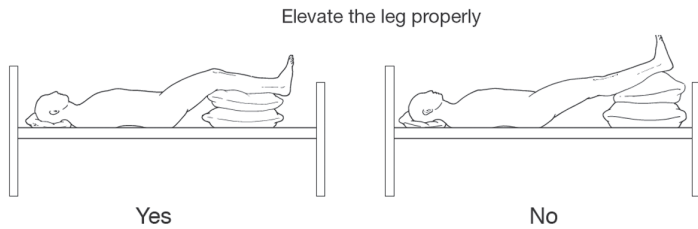
Pain relief. The anesthesia you were given during surgery may soon wear off. You will need to start taking your prescribed pain medication before this happens so that you can “stay ahead of the pain.” Continue taking your pain medication as prescribed.

Your dressing. It is very important that you keep your incision and dressing dry and clean. Therefore, be sure to protect your foot from getting wet when you bathe. It is normal to have a small amount of blood on the bandage. Do not remove the dressing unless instructed by your surgeon.

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Elevating your foot and ankle. To reduce swelling, your foot and ankle should be raised slightly above the level of your heart.



Icing. Swelling is also reduced by icing the operated area. Follow the instructions we provided you for icing.

Weight bearing. Your instructions regarding weight bearing are as follows:

_____ *Non-weight bearing.* No weight can be placed on the operated extremity. An assistive device such as crutches or a walker will be necessary.

_____ *Partial-weight bearing.* You can place a portion of your weight on the operated extremity. Crutches, a cane, or walker will be necessary.

_____ *Full-weight bearing.* You can place all of your weight on the operated extremity with the following protective devices provided: _____.

Possible problems. Call our office immediately if any of the following potential problems occur:

- Severe swelling or pain in the calf
- Excessive amounts of blood on the dressing
- Redness
- Toes, foot, and/or ankle that become cold or turns pale
- Blue or white toes or toenail beds
- Foul odor from your surgical site
- Fever above 102 degrees – Check your temperature daily
- Severe pain that is not relieved with pain medication

Contact our office at: _____.

If you can't reach our office, go to the emergency room.

Follow-up appointment: _____

Notes:

