Foot or Ankle Surgery

Instructions for patients going home

You had a general anesthetic.
Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.

What can I eat and drink after my operation?
You can go back to eating and drinking what you normally would right away.

If you are feeling nauseated (sick to your stomach) or you are vomiting, you can get anti-nausea medicine (Gravol by mouth or rectally) from your pharmacy without a prescription. Take it as directed and keep drinking fluids until the nausea passes. Then slowly return to your normal diet.

What activities can I do after my operation?

• Go home and rest today.
• If you had a Regional Block (if your foot had been frozen) it might take a few hours for the feeling in your foot to be normal again. Don't walk or move around any more than you have to until all the feeling and movement comes back.
• When you are sitting or lying down, raise your foot up on 1 or 2 pillows. This will prevent swelling and bleeding.
• Do NOT stand on your foot for long periods of time.
• Do not do any strenuous activities like jogging or cycling until your surgeon tells you it is safe.
• Your surgeon will tell you when you can go back to work and sports. The time you have to wait depends on your job and the sport you play.
How should I walk?

- You have a walking cast (a cast with a plastic heal). You can walk and put as much weight on your foot as you can handle. Walk on the heel of your foot. **Do NOT walk on your toes.**

- You have a cast or splint that does not let you put weight on your foot. Use crutches to walk. Don't put weight on your foot. (Follow the instructions in the pamphlet called "How to Use Crutches").

- Your foot is wrapped in a tensor bandage. You can walk and put as much weight on your foot as you can tolerate.

- Wear the "ortho-boot" when you walk. **Do NOT walk on your toes.**

- Your foot is wrapped in a dressing that will be taken off in a few days by someone in the Fracture Clinic. They will put your foot in a cast. Once you have the cast on, you can walk and put as much weight on your foot as you can tolerate. Wear the "rocker boot" when you walk. Do NOT walk on your toes.

How do I take care of my wound?

Special instructions for you:

- Take off your dressing (bandage) _____ days after your operation. Always keep your wound clean and dry.

- Do NOT take off your dressing until you meet with your surgeon at your follow-up appointment.

- You have stitches. Put Polysporin® cream and then a Band Aid on your wound until the wound heals. This will take 7 to 10 days. (You can buy Polysporin® cream without a prescription at any pharmacy.)

- Your stitches will be taken out in 10 to 14 days. Make an appointment with your family doctor or with the Fracture Clinic at 416-603-5858 to have the stitches taken out.

- If you have steri-strips, leave them in place until they peel off on their own.
• Always keep your wound clean and dry. Wear clean socks during the day.
• Put an ice compress (an ice pack or ice that you have put in a bag) against your foot for 15 to 20 minutes. Do this 3 or 4 times every day for the first 2 to 4 days after your operation.

How do I take showers?
• You can take a shower 2 to 3 days after your operation, but your foot must be wrapped in plastic while the dressing is in place.
• NO BATHS or SWIMMING until your surgeon says it is safe to do so.
• When the dressings are removed, you no longer have to cover your foot with plastic.
• If you have steri-strips, keep them in place until they fall off or have been removed in 7 days. Leave them on to shower. Pat the area dry gently.
• After the steri-strips have been removed you can put Polysporin® cream and a clean Band Aid on your wound. (Do not put Polysporin cream if you have steri-strips).
• Put the tensor wrap back on if your surgeon has asked you to do so.

How do I cope with pain?
• Pain is normal after this operation. Your should have less and less every day.
• We will give you a prescription for your pain. We will also give you a prescription for your swelling. Take the prescriptions to a pharmacy and follow the directions for taking the medications.
• If you had a Regional Block it might take a few hours for the feeling in your foot to be normal again. When you start to feel tingling (pins and needles) this means the regional block is wearing off and you should start to take your prescribed pain medication.
• Take the pain medication every 4 hours for the first 24 to 48 hours if you are feeling pain. After the first 24 to 48 hours, you can slowly take less of your pain medication as your pain gets better. Take less and less until you don't need any pain medication at all.
• If you are having mild pain you can take Tylenol® Extra Strength as directed on the bottle.

• It is best to take your pain medication before you do any activity that may cause more pain (for example physiotherapy).

• Take the medication for swelling as directed.

• Pain medication can make you constipated. To prevent constipation:
  ✓ Drink lots of fluids (3 to 5 glasses of water every day. Each glass should be about 8 ounces).
  ✓ Eat foods that are high in fibre (like bran and fruits).
  ✓ Take Milk of Magnesia® as directed on the bottle if you have not had a bowel movement for 72 hours. You can get this from your pharmacy without a prescription. If you have been given a prescription for the swelling, take the medication as directed.

• Some pain medications can cause nausea and vomiting. You can get anti-nausea medication (Gravol® - take by mouth or rectally) from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions and keep taking your pain medication and drinking fluids until the nausea passes.

What to do in an emergency

Bleeding that won't stop
  • Bleeding that soaks through the dressing and will not stop.

Severe Pain
  • Pain that does not get better when you take the medication that was prescribed.
  • Have the phone number of your pharmacy ready when you call because the doctor might want to call your pharmacy to change your prescription.
Swelling

• Your foot or ankle is very swollen.
• Your toes feel cold and/or have changed colour (they are pale white or bluish).
• You have less feeling in your foot/ankle.
• You can't move your toes.

Fever

• If your temperature goes higher than 38°C or 101°F.

If you have these symptoms, then it is very important that you:

• Call your surgeon or your family doctor or
• Call (416) 340-3155 and ask to speak to the Orthopedic Resident on call or
• Go to the nearest hospital emergency department

Your follow-up appointment

If you don't already have a follow-up appointment, please call your surgeon's office or the Fracture Clinic at 416-603-5858 to make one. Your appointment should be 7 to 10 days after your operation.