

# After Your Foot or Ankle Surgery

## Information for patients preparing for recovery at home

Read this brochure to learn about:

- How to take care of yourself at home
- How to cope with pain
- What activities are safe to do
- Problems to watch for
- When to get medical help
- What to know about your follow-up visit



### **You have had an anesthetic or narcotic medicine.**

- Do not drive a car or drink alcohol for 24 hours.
- Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.





## What can I eat and drink after my surgery?

You can return to eating and drinking as normal. Slowly start by having fluids and soups on the day of the surgery. Then return to your normal diet the next day.

If you are feeling nauseated (upset stomach) or you are vomiting, you can buy an anti-nausea medicine from your pharmacy without a prescription (such as Gravol, which you can take as a pill or rectally). Always follow the instructions on the package.

Keep drinking fluids until the nausea passes. Then slowly return to eating your normal foods.



## How much activity is safe?

Go home and rest the first day.

If you had a regional block (if your foot had been frozen) it may take a few hours for the feeling in your foot to be normal again.

- You can begin by taking short walks and you can take the stairs. Just remember to hold onto the hand rail and follow your exercise instructions. **Important: Follow your surgeon's specific instructions and use crutches if you cannot put weight on your foot.**
- Do NOT walk or move around more than you have to until all the feeling and movement comes back.
- Do NOT stand on your foot for long periods of time.
- Do NOT cross your legs.
- Do NOT do any strenuous activities like shoveling snow, jogging, aerobics, swimming or cycling until your surgeon tells you it is safe.
- When you are sitting or lying down, raise your foot up on 1 or 2 pillows. This prevents swelling and bleeding.
- 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?

Your surgeon has written specific instructions on how you should walk or NOT walk on your operated foot.

- 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. If you were given an 'ortho boot', wear it when you are up walking.
- You have a cast or splint that does NOT let you put weight on your foot. Use crutches to walk. Do NOT put weight on your foot. (If you have never used crutches before, follow the instructions in the patient pamphlet called "How to Use Crutches." Ask your nurse for the pamphlet or visit our [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca)



## How do I take care of my dressing (bandage) and tensor bandage?

- Keep your dressing/wound clean and dry at all times.
- DO NOT take off your dressing unless instructed to do so.

### If your surgeon instructed you to remove your dressing (bandage):

- Gently remove your outer dressing 5 days after your surgery.
- If you have stitches, put a Band-Aid over your wound once you have taken off the dressing. You will need to wear Band-Aids for the next 7 to 10 days (until the stitches are taken out).
- Your stitches should be taken off in 12 to 14 days. Make an appointment with your family doctor to have this done or make an appointment at the Fracture Clinic (416 603 5858) at the Toronto Western Hospital.
- If you have steri-strips (tape), leave them in place for 10 days. If they begin to fall off before the 10 days, peel them off and throw them away.

- If you were given a tensor bandage, you can wear it for comfort and support. Do not put it on too tightly as you wrap your leg because this can stop the blood flow in your foot. If the tensor is too tight, loosen it and reapply. You will know the tensor is too tight if the area turns purple or you feel tingling.



## **How do I shower or bathe?**

- You can take a shower 3 days after your surgery. But you must cover your operated foot or dressing with a plastic waterproof cover or a plastic bag. Make sure you do NOT get your dressing wet.
- 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, you can shower with them on. After you shower gently pat them dry.
- After you shower, you can put a tensor bandage back on using slight tension.

## **How do I cope with pain?**

It is normal to feel pain after this surgery. Your pain should get better after a few days. We will give you a prescription for pain medicine, and possibly for swelling. Take the prescription to a pharmacy to have it filled and follow the directions for taking the medication. You should begin to take the medicine as soon as your block (freezing) in the foot begins to wear off.

Take the pain medicine as directed for the first 24 hours if you are feeling pain. After the first 24 hours, you can gradually decrease your pain medicine as you feel more comfortable. (Take less and less pain medicine until you don't need any.)

Icing your foot helps with the pain and swelling.

- If you were asked to use an ice pack, apply it for 15 to 20 minutes every hour. Do this every day for the first 5 days after your surgery. Be careful not to get the tensor or dressing wet.
- If you have the Cold Compress Cuff, wear it as much as possible for the first week, and then as needed. Follow the directions included in the device.
- **Do NOT use heat packs on your operated foot.**

### **Safely store and dispose of your pain medicine**

Pain medicine that is not stored or disposed of safely could be stolen or taken by mistake.

#### **Safe storage**

- Store pain medicine in a locked drawer or cabinet.
- Do not share your pain medicine. Pain medicine prescribed to you can be dangerous to others.

#### **Safe disposal**

It is dangerous to keep unused or expired pain medicine that you no longer need.

- Take unused or expired pain medicine to a pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Do not flush medicine down the toilet.
- Do not throw medicine in the garbage.

### **What if I get constipated?**

Pain medication can cause constipation. To prevent constipation:

- ✓ Drink 3 to 5 glasses of water every day (each glass should be about 8 ounces).
- ✓ Eat foods that are high in fibre (such as bran and fruits).
- ✓ If you have not had a bowel movement for 72 hours, take Milk of Magnesia. You can buy this from your pharmacy without a prescription. Follow the directions on the bottle.

## What to do in an emergency:



**Call your surgeon or your family doctor or go to the Toronto Western Hospital emergency department if any of these problems below happen to you. (If you are from out of town, go to the nearest emergency department.)**

### **Bleeding that won't stop**

- Press on the area for 30 minutes. If the bleeding does not stop and soaks the dressing.

### **Pain**

- If your pain becomes very bad and it doesn't get better when you take the pain medicine that we prescribed, call your surgeon or family doctor. Please have the phone number for your pharmacy ready because the doctor may want to call the pharmacy to change your prescription.

### **Swelling**

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

### **Fever**

- If your temperature goes higher than 38 °C or 101 °F, call your surgeon.



## Your follow-up appointment

Your follow up appointment should be 2 weeks after your surgery. If you do not have an appointment, call:

- Fracture Clinic**  
Fell Pavilion – 1st Floor (Room 577)  
Toronto Western Hospital  
399 Bathurst Street  
Phone: 416 603 5858
- Altum Health:** If you are getting follow-up care at Altum Health, they will call you with the date, time and location of your appointment.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

- Dr. Desai
- Dr. Oglvie-Harris
- Dr. Latham
- Dr. Santone
- Dr. Lau
- Dr. Syed
- Dr. Leone
- Dr. Van Vliet
- Dr. Lexier
- Dr. Zywiell
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Visit [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca) for more health information.

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