

## Foot/Ankle Surgery Post-Op Discharge Instructions

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### FOOT/ANKLE SURGERY POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

**What to Expect:** It is normal to feel tired and washed out after surgery. Rest is important, but walking is also important to prevent problems and to regain your strength and energy. Pace yourself according to how you feel. Rest when you feel tired.

You may have a sore throat if you have had general anesthesia. This is normal and will go away in 1-2 days.

If you have a nerve block, the local anesthetic may keep your foot/ankle numb for up to 24 hours. Please refer to the separate nerve block instructions for more information.

Your foot/ankle can remain painful and swollen for several weeks time, depending on the problem you have and the amount of surgery that was done. You may experience some bruising around your incisions. Swelling is to be expected after any surgery. It is difficult to specify what constitutes an abnormal amount of swelling. You can minimize swelling by staying off your feet and keeping the foot elevated above the level of your heart. This is best accomplished by lying flat on your back with your foot propped up on a few pillows. By doing this, the foot is kept above the level of your heart and swelling is minimized.

**Pain Management:** You can expect to have pain for the first week or so after surgery. The pain is often worse at night. You will be given a prescription for pain medication upon discharge from the hospital. You should take this narcotic pain medication as directed for moderate to severe pain. You should take your pain medication with food. If you cannot tolerate this pain medication because of nausea or itching, please call the office. You should call the office for a refill several days before you run out of pain medication. It cannot be called into your pharmacy and mailing a new prescription will take 2-3 business days. Narcotics will not be refilled by the on-call physician after hours or on weekends.

For mild pain, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol). (However remember that medications such as Percocet, Vicodin, and Tylenol #3 contain acetaminophen and you should not take more than 4000 mg of acetaminophen daily.)

Do not take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication like Motrin, Advil, Ibuprofen, Aleve or Naprosyn as these can cause bleeding.

Pain medication can cause constipation. To make it easier to have a bowel movement you can drink extra fluids, eat foods high in fiber, or take a stool softener such as colace.

Pain medications can also cause itching of the skin. For mild itching you can take Benadryl.

Do not drive, drink alcohol or make important decisions while taking narcotic pain medication. Please call your doctor if the pain medication is not working.

**Other Medications:** You may also be given other prescriptions after surgery for the following medications:

Aspirin or Lovenox is prescribed post-op for the prevention of lower extremity blood clots (DVTs). Vistaril and Zofran are anti-nausea medications. Indocin helps prevent the formation of unwanted bone-growth post-op. Pepcid is prescribed along with the Indocin to prevent stomach upset. Keflex (or other antibiotics) may be prescribed if you have a drain in place or if your surgeon feels it is appropriate.

**Treatment of Nausea:** If you received a Scopolamine patch (behind your ear) in the hospital, leave it in place for 24 hours. Be sure to wash your hands immediately after taking it off.

If you are nauseous or vomiting limit your intake to clear liquids only, and advance diet as tolerated. If still nauseous or vomiting after 12 hours, please call the office.

**Dressing/Splint:** You have a soft dressing / splint in place. **DO NOT TAKE YOUR DRESSING OFF UNTIL YOUR FIRST POST-OPERATIVE VISIT.** You should keep it clean/dry and intact until your first post-operative visit.

Please do not shower or get your surgical dressings wet. **Do not** get the bandages wet. When bathing, either take a sponge bath or hang the foot over the side of the bath. One safe technique is to get into the empty tub with your foot out of the tub, then fill the tub. Preferably, empty the tub prior to getting out.

**Icing:** Use ice over the foot for about 48 hours after surgery. The small commercially available ice packs are not ideal. Instead, we recommend filling a large plastic bag with ice and propping the bag over the foot. Ice your foot for approximately 10-15 minutes while you are awake. Do not ice your foot while you are asleep.

**Exercises:** You will be given instructions on weight-bearing after surgery.

You should use crutches as directed.

For the first 2 weeks following surgery, for every 15 minutes you spend on your feet, you must then spend 1 hour lying down with your operative extremity elevated.

You should not do any sports or athletics, such as aerobics, running or weight lifting until you have seen your doctor at your first post-operative visit.

**What Activities am I allowed to do at Home:** You should plan on taking time off from work. The exact amount of time depends on the surgery you had and also the nature of your job. Please discuss the exact length of time with Dr. Smith.

You may not drive until at least your first post-operative visit. Our general policy is that you cannot drive until you are off pain killers and are wearing normal shoes. Often, patients who have had right lower extremity surgery cannot drive for a minimum of 9 weeks.

You should drink lots of fluids and eat light foods at first like toast, crackers, soup and ginger ale.

Avoid smoking or caffeinated drinks as they impair healing.

**Postoperative Visit:** You should call your doctor's office the day after your surgery to schedule your post-operative visit, unless you already have an appointment.

**When to Call:** If you have any trouble breathing or are having chest pain, you should dial 911 right away.

For any of the following danger signs, you should call your doctor's office:

1. You have continual bleeding that soaks through the dressing.
2. You have fever over 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit (38.6 degrees Celsius)
3. There is redness, a foul odor, or white drainage associated with your wound.
4. Your toes become pale, cool or feel numb.

Please understand that the post-operative course varies from patient to patient, and these are meant only as guidelines to a smoother recovery. These instructions may not cover all aspects of your post-operative care and recovery. Please call if you have any further questions that are unanswered by this sheet.