

What To Expect After Foot and Ankle Surgery...

After your surgery has been completed, you will be accompanied to the recovery room where you will spend the next hour recovering from the anesthesia. Depending on the type of surgery you had, the anesthesiologist may administer a popliteal block. This usually happens about an hour after surgery and can be helpful for further post-operative pain relief. Before going home, you will receive a prescription for pain medication and instructions from the nurses.

The First 24 Hours

Once you are home from the operation, REST. It is important to keep your foot elevated above heart level for the first few days after surgery to help decrease post-operative swelling. When you are situated at home, try to eat something if you can. This will prevent you from having an empty stomach when you begin taking pain medication.

ONCE YOU THINK THE FOOT OR ANKLE IS BEGINNING TO HURT, START THE PAIN MEDICATION. It is important to stay ahead of the pain rather than trying to catch up once the pain is unbearable. If you had a popliteal block after surgery, you may find that you do not need pain pills until 12–24 hours after the operation. Start the pain medication once the block wears off.

A small amount of blood on the surgical dressing is normal as long as it stops. If the bleeding continues or if the toes are cold and blue, contact the office or the physician-on-call. PLEASE REMEMBER TO CALL THE OFFICE THE NEXT DAY TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT FOR 10-14 DAYS AFTER YOUR SURGERY.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How much activity am I allowed?

You should remain NON-WEIGHT BEARING with crutches or a walker on the operated leg until the first post-operative office visit. It is advisable for the first few days to keep the foot as elevated as possible to minimize pain and swelling.

How much pain medication can I take?

The most common narcotics prescribed after foot and ankle surgery are Percocet or Vicadin. Both of these may be taken 1 to 2 tablets every 4 hours as needed for the pain. If you should experience significant nausea or an allergic reaction, please contact the office of the physician-on-call.

What should I eat?

You can begin eating whatever you think you can tolerate. It is probably wise to start with liquids and if they stay down to progress to solid foods.

What about bathing and sleeping?

To take a bath or shower, protect the operated leg with a clean plastic bag taped around the leg to avoid getting it wet. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS KEEP THE SURGICAL DRESSING CLEAN AND DRY. If your dressing gets wet, use a blow dryer to dry it. If it is too wet, come in for a dressing change. For sleeping, a cardboard box at the foot of your bed with one end cut out can help keep the blankets off your feet.

When is my next appointment?

You should contact the office the next day to schedule your first post-operative appointment for 10-14 days after surgery. Typically on that visit, the compressive bandage and the stitches or staples are removed (this usually is not very painful). An x-ray is taken of your leg to check alignment. Either a fiberglass cast, removable cast, or a soft dressing will be applied. Pain control is assessed and adjusted as needed. Your activity level will be advanced depending on the type of surgery you had.

What problems do I need to call the doctor for?

If you are having a persistently elevated temperature, if the swelling or pain INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY several days after the surgery, please call the office or the physician-on-call.