



## Foot and Ankle Surgical Information

### Introduction

Foot and ankle surgery is a specialised area of surgery.

The surgery can be challenging and each patient is different with unique needs and goals.

You will need to follow instructions, performed appropriate exercises and modify your activities during your healing process.

This requires patience and persistence. If you are unable to complete the post-operative instructions it will affect your results and you should consider alternate treatments.

Whenever surgery is considered we aim to minimise risks. Non-operative options are explained before a surgical path is offered. However, the body is a very complex and varied structure so, although we aim for perfection, no specialist can achieve perfect results every time. It is also important to acknowledge that your treatment involves teamwork and that the patient is also an important team member.

### **Successful results require a contribution from you.**

This information is intended to provide you with generic pre-operative, surgical and post-operative instructions in regard to your surgical procedure.

It is important that you read all of this information carefully and bring it with you when you come to hospital. If you have any questions or are not certain about the benefits, risks and limitations of your treatment, please seek clarification before your surgery (see our contact details).

### *What do I take to Hospital?*

- **Your x-rays/scans. If you do not bring your x-rays/scans, surgery may not be able to proceed**
- Documentation about your Health Fund
- Pathology results
- Medication
- Any letter from doctors
- Any questions that you have written down and wish to ask

### *Will I need someone to take me home?*

You must make arrangements for a responsible adult to take you home after your surgery.

It is strongly suggested that you have someone stay with you for at least the first 24 hours.

### *What should I wear?*

Wear loose fitting clothes that are easy to put on and will fit over a plaster cast or surgical dressings. Leave any jewellery and valuables at home. Please remove makeup and nail polish. Shower either the night before or the morning of your surgery. Pay particular care that your feet and nails are clean.

### *Local Anaesthetic Block Pain Management*

A local anaesthetic block may be given to you during surgery. This will produce numbness around the nerves in the region of your surgical procedure. It will provide you with pain relief for approximately 8 – 12 hours post-operatively enabling you to be comfortable and allow you to sleep after your surgery.

### *Discharge Home*

- Plan to rest after surgery to minimise bleeding and swelling
- Most patients benefit from 2 weeks of strict foot elevation
- Have someone who is responsible available to take you home as you **will not be allowed to drive**
- Once you arrive home wait until you are hungry before eating. Begin with a light meal such as a sandwich/fruit/tea/coffee or juice. A heavy meal can cause nausea and vomiting after an operation
- Take your medication for pain as directed. A physiotherapist may see you if required while you are in hospital to give you instruction as to walking, weight bearing, exercises and use of any aids (e.g. crutches). Once you can demonstrate that you can safely use crutches, able to negotiate stairs and pain relief is adequate, then you can go home



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### Post-Operative Instruction

These instructions are important in helping you rehabilitate from your surgery. Please follow them carefully. If there is anything you do not understand, please ask.

#### Rest

It is important that you rest and keep your foot elevated as much as possible for the first 14 days to encourage healing and discourage wound breakdown.

#### Pain Management

Pain is better treated before it arrives.

Regular pain killers taken in the post-operative phase is very important. It is recommended that you take regular analgesic, as prescribed, whilst pain is moderate to severe. However, after that period it is recommended that you take regular Panadol, unless contrary indicated, up until your post-operative visit.

Certain pain killers can cause constipation. We recommend taking products such as Metamucil in combination with a high fibre diet.

**Please take 2 Panadol 2 hours prior to your post-operative appointment.**

**If you have been prescribed Fragmin you must continue until you have completed the course of injections, unless otherwise advised.**

If you have any problems taking any of these medications please let the medical staff know.

**There is no need for you to be in constant pain.**

#### Elevation

Swelling can delay wound healing and cause the wound to break down. Swelling can be due to over activity and not keeping your foot elevated and this can also increase the risk of infection.

Place your operated leg on 2 pillows or a bean bag so that it is above the level of your hip when you are lying down. The use of ice packs (or frozen peas, beans etc.) can be a very effective way of reducing swelling. Place the ice pack in a towel over the ankle or foot for 20 minutes 3-4 times per day.

#### Exercise

While you are resting it is important that you do passive gentle movement exercises. This is to encourage your blood flow, muscle strengthening and prevention of joint stiffness.

The exercise information given to you is designed to help you with your rehabilitation and to gain the best results after surgery.

Continue with your exercises once you are home and up until your post-operative appointment.

#### Dressings

Keep your bandages/cast clean and dry. Leave intact until your post-operative appointment. It is very common for a small amount of blood ooze to be present in the dressings.

When showering/ bathing, wrap the dressings or cast in a plastic kitchen or garbage bag and seal the top of the bag above your dressings with tape.

### Post-Operative Problems

If after reading and following the post-operative instructions you are experiencing any of the following problems please call the rooms:

#### Infection

- Wounds feel hot and tender
- Unusual discharge from your wound or dressings or an odour from your dressings
- Fever may be present and a general feeling of unwell

#### Swelling

- Swelling is not reduced with elevation of the leg
- A change in colour of your toes or coldness
- The calf muscle in your lower leg of the treated foot swelling or is painful

#### Bleeding

- Your dressings are showing excessive amount of fresh blood
- Elevation and application of pressure dressings does not stop the bleeding

#### Pain

- The medication that has been prescribed for you is not helping control the pain while you have been resting with your limb elevated

#### Medication

- You are experiencing ill effects due to the medication that has been prescribed for pain e.g. nausea, vomiting, gastric discomfort