

Foot and Ankle Fusions

Updated March 2020

CRUTCHES / SCOOTERS

- At all times for ambulation for the first 10 weeks.

WEIGHT-BEARING STATUS

- Non-weight bearing for first 10 weeks
- Partial weight bearing from 10-12 weeks
- Full weight bearing from 12 weeks onwards

SPLINT

- You will leave the hospital in a splint or removable boot. Leave this on as instructed.
- At your first follow-up, you will be asked to wear a removable boot.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

- Start formal physical therapy 6 weeks from surgery

WOUND CARE

Bandages:

- If you find the dressing is too tight, you may unwrap the tensor bandage and rewrap it looser.
- Do not remove your splint. You will receive specific instructions if you are to change your dressings.

Shower:

- You may shower but keep your splint dry.
- **NO soaking in bathtub/hot tub or pool for first 2-3 weeks even when splint off.**

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF INFECTION:

- Excessive or worsening pain, increased redness around the incision sites, drainage from incisions that looks like pus and/or is foul smelling, if fever runs above 38.5°C.
- If any of the above symptoms occur call Central Alberta Orthopedics at 403-309-2001 or go to the emergency department right away.

CONTROL OF PAIN AND SWELLING:

Pain Medication:

- For the first few days take your pain medication and anti-inflammatories regularly as instructed, then wean as tolerated. Avoid taking pain medications on an empty stomach.
- Wean yourself off of Percocet/Tramacet to Extra Strength Tylenol (acetaminophen) by Day 5 after surgery.

Cold Therapy:

With a removable boot

- If you have a cold therapy machine, use it as much as possible as per device instructions.
- If you don't have a cold therapy machine, remove outer bandage to ice for 20-30 minutes, at least four times for several days. Use it more frequently as needed to help in reducing pain. Avoid placing ice directly on bare skin to prevent frostbite. Have a 30-minute break in between sessions.

Elevation:

- Keep leg elevated above the level of your heart as often as possible with a pillow under your calf, NOT under the knee.

PREVENTING BLOOD CLOTS

- Make sure you get up and walk around as much as possible; mobilizing prevents clots.
- Take the blood thinner your surgeon prescribed.

Signs and Symptoms of Blood Clots:

- Severe and worsening pain and swelling in the calf muscle.
- Chest pain and/or shortness of breath.
- If you have these symptoms, call Health Link at 8-1-1 or go to the emergency department right away.
- **Blood clots, if left untreated, have the potential to become LIFE THREATENING.**

DRIVING:

- **RIGHT LEG** – may be up to 8-12 weeks once you are allowed to fully weight bear.
- **LEFT LEG** – you may drive an automatic vehicle if you have a below-knee cast or splint
- You may return to driving a vehicle (non-commercial) when you are no longer affected by pain or under the influence of pain medications, able to **fully weight bear on right leg for automatic transmission and both right and left legs for standard transmission**, and you must also be confident that you can react appropriately in an emergency.

FLYING:

- Avoid flying within 4 weeks of surgery as it increases your risk of developing a blood clot.

EXPECTED RECOVERY:

- Back to sedentary duties by 2-6 weeks post-op
- Back to medium or modified duties by 3-6 months post-op
- Back to heavy labour or sports by 6-9 months post-op

Due to the anesthetic, for the next 24 hours: Do NOT drive, sign legal documents, provide child care on your own or consume alcohol.