

### **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, your anesthesiologist may have administered a popliteal block, or a pain pump. This usually happens in the hour prior to surgery, and can be helpful for post-operative pain relief.

Before going home, the cam-walker/surgical boot that you received from our office will be applied, and the nursing staff will review and confirm your prescription and post-operative instructions.

#### **The First 24 Hours**

Once you are home from the operation, REST. It is important to keep your foot elevated above heart level and to keep an ice bag on the foot or behind the knee to help control swelling. While you are awake, ice for every 15 minutes, every 1-3 hours. Once you are situated at home, try to eat something light; you should not take pain medication on an empty stomach.

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 or a pain pump, you may find that you do not need pain pills until 12 to 24 hours after the operation. For the first three days, make sure to take the pain medicine as directed. The pain medication and ice should help to “control” your pain, however, it will NOT take away all of the pain.

Obviously, do not attempt to operate heavy machinery, drive an automobile or make important decisions while under the influence of anesthesia for 24-hours after surgery, or while taking pain medications.

A small amount of blood on the surgical dressing is normal. If the bleeding continues or if your toes are cold and blue, contact the office or the physician-on-call.

#### **Issues that should not be ignored**

Although rare, any of the following symptoms are potential signs of a more severe complication: **Fever above 101 degrees, chest pain, leg or calf swelling or pain, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, a severe rash, extreme drowsiness, or excessive nausea and vomiting are all issues that should not be ignored.**

Please contact our office with any questions or for any of the above concerns. As an abundance of caution, you may be directed to return to the clinic or proceed to a local hospital or emergency department for further medical evaluation.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How much activity am I allowed?**

It's always best to limit activity for the first few days; remember: take it easy.

The amount of activity varies depending on the procedure, but unless directed otherwise: refrain from any weight bearing on the surgical side and utilize the post-operative surgical boot, crutches, or a walker, as needed.

It is recommended to keep your foot as elevated as possible, to minimize pain and swelling.

Generally, you can resume driving when you return to regular shoes and full weight bearing,

### **How much pain medication can I take?**

The most common pain medicines prescribed after foot and ankle surgery are Percocet or Vicodin. 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 doctor's assistant.

### **What should I eat?**

It's generally best to start with liquids, and then advance to light foods, slowly progressing to a normal diet.

### **What about bathing and sleeping?**

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS KEEP THE SURGICAL DRESSING CLEAN AND DRY.**

To take a bath or shower, protect the operated foot with a dressing guard from our office or a clean plastic bag taped around the leg to avoid getting it wet.

If your dressing gets wet, contact the office to come in for a dressing change.

Do NOT take a bath, get into a pool or hot tub, or soak your foot or ankle until cleared to do so by your doctor!

It's not necessary to wear the post-operative boot to bed. However, the post-op boot should be worn during the day at all times to protect the surgical site.

### **When is my next appointment?**

If you haven't already scheduled a post-operative appointment, call the office to do so.