

Postoperative ankle fracture instructions

Elevation is absolutely critical to your recovery. Ice is not as helpful because you have thick bandages/dressings. Keep your foot elevated 12 to 16" above your heart for the first 72 hours after surgery. Think "toes above your nose."

Swelling is controlled by elevation, not medication. The best way to keep your swelling and therefore pain under control is elevation. Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) don't reduce swelling that has already occurred, they prevent new inflammation and subsequent swelling. Avoiding all NSAIDs is recommended for six weeks post fracture (surgical and nonsurgical) to minimize risk of delayed bone healing.

Don't trade sleep for elevation. If you can't sleep on your back with your foot elevated, stop elevating. Sleep is more important.

What to expect after surgery

Weeks 1 to 2:

- Minimal activity out of the house. **Strict non-weight bearing.** Use knee scooter, crutches, walker, or wheelchair immediately after surgery to assist you but bear no weight on your surgical leg.
- Elevate your leg and ankle whenever resting.
- Gradually decrease the pain medication you're taking. Soreness is your body telling you to slow down, so listen to it. Your bone is healing during this time. Do not push through pain!
- Exercise: Avoid exercise of any kind for the first two weeks, and no exercise involving the operative limb for at least six weeks.

Weeks 2 to 6:

- Gradually increase activities as advised by your physician. **Strict non-weight bearing in cast or splint.** Listen to your foot and ankle. If it is sore, rest. Your bone and supporting soft tissues are still healing. Pain is still not your friend. If it hurts, don't do it!
- After your sutures come out, and you are out of the cast, you may get your ankle wet in the shower. No bathing tubs or soaking.
- Exercise: No exercise involving the operative limb. Begin upper body/core and range of motion exercises.

Continued healing:

- Begin transition out of the CAM boot once x-rays demonstrate healing.
- Begin formal physical therapy. PT helps to retrain your gait and re-educate your muscles from walking improperly. You may begin doing regular activities gradually and wearing regular shoes. **It's not unusual to take two to three weeks to feel comfortable walking in regular shoes.** Keep using your CAM boot if you have pain while walking in shoes. Please be patient. It can take up to a year to get to a final result.
- Exercise: Increase resistance on bike, start using an elliptical trainer and progress weight bearing on a treadmill **as pain and your physical therapist allow.**

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