

TOTAL ANKLE REPLACEMENT

Postoperative Recovery Protocol

Type of Procedure:	In-patient, 1-2 day hospital stay, possible same day outpatient surgery
Length of Procedure:	2 hours
Anesthesia:	General anesthesia with nerve block

General Recovery Facts

- You will not be walking on the leg for 8 weeks
- You will use crutches, a walker, a wheelchair or a scooter device called a roll-about
- There will be a hard plaster bandage or a hard cast applied to the leg for 2 weeks
- Your first follow up visit will be at approximately 2 weeks to remove the stitches
- We will usually apply a removable boot for you to wear at this time, but occasionally we use a short leg below the knee cast for a short period of time. If a cast is used, it is to keep the ankle stretched up and to prevent stiffness
- If the surgery is on your left ankle, you should be able to drive an automatic vehicle at two weeks. If the surgery is on the right ankle, you may drive between 4-6 weeks
- Exercises and range of movement of the foot and ankle are to be encouraged at about 2-3 weeks after surgery
- If you have access to a swimming pool, we encourage you to use this as soon as the incisions are completely dry and healed, which will be at about 2-3 weeks. Swimming will significantly improve your recovery and allow you to begin bearing some weight on the leg in the pool. The best way to regain movement is to put fins or flippers on to the foot and move the ankle up and down in the water
- You should remove the boot for twenty minutes three times a day to exercise
- You will begin walking on the leg and ankle at about 6-8 weeks in a boot
- You may begin to walk without the boot at about 8 weeks, depending upon your level of discomfort and instructions given to you by your doctor
- Physical therapy is very helpful and begins at 4-6 weeks
- You should plan to use a physical therapist for about 1-2 months
- There will be moderate swelling of the ankle and leg for about 6 months
- You will continue to improve your strength and movement for about 9 months

Exercise and sporting activity after your total ankle replacement

For many individuals, a return to an active lifestyle is our goal following this surgery. For some, this may mean the ability to walk without pain, and for others, a more regular exercise routine may be more important. Regular exercise in a gym is always to be encouraged, and the use of all machines including bicycle, stair climber, and elliptical machines are excellent to regain strength and movement of the ankle. It is never recommended that you run. You may however engage in golf, prolonged hiking or walking, doubles tennis and bicycling, and under certain circumstances, skiing. An orthotic arch support is important for your recovery. The orthotic support will be made in our office following a computer analysis of the pressure of the foot. You should wear a stiff soled shoe for one to two months.



Specific post-operative recovery

Day 1

1. Foot is wrapped in bulky bandage and splint, possibly a cast.
2. Ice, elevate, take pain medication.
3. Expect numbness in foot 12-24 hours then moderate to severe pain.
4. Bloody drainage through bandage is expected.
5. Use crutches, walker, wheelchair or roll-a-bout.
6. Do not change dressing/splint and do not get the leg wet

2 weeks

1. X-rays taken, dressing changed, sutures or staples are removed
2. A removable boot is applied, occasionally a cast
3. Start motion out of the boot as instructed
4. You can shower, provided the incision is clean and dry, apply antibiotic ointment to the incision
5. 30lbs. of body weight is allowed 5 minutes twice a day when washing/bathing
6. Start in a swimming pool using a flipper to help movement of the ankle once completely healed and dry. You can bear some weight in the pool if there is no discomfort or pain
7. At 4 weeks you may use a stationary bike, but with no pressure nor resistance on the ankle

6-8 weeks

1. Full weight-bearing in a boot. You should plan to walk as long as there is no pain in the ankle
2. Start physical therapy, and by 8 weeks you should start walking out of the boot if comfortable
3. Continue physical therapy, and increase activity according to instructions from your doctor
4. An orthotic arch support is important for your recovery. The orthotic support will be made in our office following a computer analysis of the pressure of the foot.

