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Ankle Fracture-ORIF Post-Operative Instructions

Dressing: Following surgery, a bandage with a plaster splint is applied to the ankle until the stitches are removed in two to three weeks. Keep the splint dry.

Showering: Showers are acceptable 24 hours after the splint and sutures are removed. Your sutures are usually removed at your first post-operative appointment. Once the sutures are removed in clinic we will place steri-strip bandages over the incision leave these on until they peel off on their own. Do not soak the ankle in a tub or submerge it. You need to keep your incisions as dry as possible. After showering, make sure that you carefully dry the ankle area.

Bleeding: Many times there is some oozing from the incisions under the splint and there may be some mild bloody drainage through the bandage and this is expected.

Swelling: Swelling is common to experience especially around the ankle and foot. Elevation of the extremity is the most important thing to do to decrease the swelling. Because of the swelling you may have some numbness in the foot. Ankle swelling will generally persist for about 9-12 months.

Relief of Pain: For mild pain, use medication such as Tylenol. Take 1-2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours as needed for pain. Do not take more than 8 tablets in a 24-hour period. For severe pain, a prescription for a stronger medication has been given to you. Take the medication as directed. Do not drink alcohol while taking a prescribed medication.

Aspirin use: If you are over the age of 35 or are a female of any age taking birth control pills, you are instructed to take an 81 mg baby Aspirin daily after surgery for 2 weeks post op. This is done to help prevent the formation of a blood clot.

Diet: After surgery, drink lots of fluids and eat a bland, nutritious meal when you return home from the hospital and or surgery center.

Nausea and Vomiting: Although unusual, both can be experienced after anesthesia in surgery. If you have a tendency for this, please discuss this with the anesthesiologist. Otherwise, it is usually alleviated with a clear liquid diet.

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Drowsiness:After anesthesia, drowsiness may persist for up to 48 hours.

Activities: Crutches have been supplied for your comfort. No walking on the foot is permitted until 6 weeks after surgery. You will then be allowed to walk in a walking boot.

Postoperative office visit: A post-operative appointment may have already been set up. If not, please call our office and make an appointment for 10-14 days after surgery.

Signs of Infection: With any surgery it is important to be aware of signs of infection, which can include: unusual looking incision such as increased redness or smell, drainage to be green or yellow, and increased fever. It is normal to have a slight temperature post operative, but above 101.5 degrees; you should contact our office.

Signs of a DVT: If you experience swelling in your calf on the operative leg or pain in your calf with flexion of the foot or with weight bearing, please contact our office immediately. If this occurs at night or over the weekend, please make your way to the closest emergency room immediately for an ultrasound to rule out a blood clot.

Physical Therapy: This usually will start after the splint and sutures are removed post-operatively. We will communicate with you when you should start and will give you a prescription if formal therapy is needed.

Common Questions: How long is my surgery? 1-2 hours. Will my family be able to keep me company? No, you will be in the first stage of recovery for about 1 to 2 hours. How long will I be kept at the facility? Plan on 3 to 4 hours. How much weight can I place on my foot? None, you will be non-weight bearing for 6 weeks. When can I drive? If the left ankle is fractured by 5-7 days, but much later if it is the right ankle usually around 8-9 weeks.

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The specific Post-Operative Course:

Day 1

- Foot is wrapped in a splint, ice, elevate, take pain medication.
- Expect numbness in foot 12-24 hours, bloody drainage through bandage is expected.

10-14 days

- First follow-up in the office, dressing changed, sutures are removed.
- A removable boot is applied, start ankle motion out of the boot 3 times each day.
- You can shower without covering, pat incision dry, no submerging incision area.

6 weeks

- Start stationary bike. No resistance.
- Start physical therapy to get back strength and movement.
- Full walking in boot is permitted if instructed to at 6 week appt.
- Do not walk without the boot unless instructed.
- You will need the boot for 3-6 more weeks.
- An ankle brace is used once the boot is discontinued.

9-12 weeks

- Boot is discontinued and activity as tolerated is begun.
- Continue with physical therapy as needed.