



OPEN REDUCTION INTERNAL FIXATION ANKLE FRACTURE POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS AND REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

This protocol has been developed for the patient following open reduction internal fixation (ORIF) after ankle fracture. This protocol may vary in length, aggressiveness and return to sports/work/activities depending on the type of ankle fracture that you had. Return to full weight-bearing may also depend on the type of ankle fracture.

For patients at a glance:

- a. **Take 1 tablet (81 mg) of aspirin per day**, starting the day after surgery and continuing **for 2 weeks**. This is recommended to reduce the risk of blood clots
- b. **Weight bearing:** After surgery you will initially be **non-weight bearing** on the operative leg and will use crutches or a knee scooter. Non-weight bearing is continued for **2-6 weeks** following surgery, depending on the type of ankle fracture. At your 2 week post op appointment further weight bearing instructions will be given.
- c. **Splint/Cam Boot:** You may have been placed into a splint or CAM boot after surgery. If you were placed into a splint, it will be removed at your 2 week post op appointment. After 2 weeks the splint is discontinued and you are placed in a CAM boot.
- d. **Elevation:** For the first 48-72 hours after surgery it is important to keep the ankle elevated at heart level or slightly above as much as possible. This is done not only to decrease swelling but also for pain control.
- e. **Showering:** It is ok to shower following surgery, but the splint must be wrapped in a plastic bag/cast cover or something similar. If you were placed into a CAM boot immediately after surgery the boot can be removed for showering but the ankle needs to be wrapped for showering. Do not scrub or soak the incision until it is fully healed ~4 weeks after surgery.
- f. **Activity/Exercises:** While in the splint/boot, immediately after surgery, work on bending and extending your toes which can help reduce swelling. It is ok to start light activity and ambulate with the crutches as your pain allows. For increasing pain rest and elevate your operative side.
- g. **Pain medications:** Take the pain medications as prescribed. You can supplement your pain medications with over-the-counter Tylenol and ibuprofen as needed. Do not exceed recommended dosages listed on the bottle.
- h. If you had a **nerve block at the time of surgery, it usually wears off 24-36 hrs post-operatively**. It is normal to have some numbness in the foot the first several days after surgery as a result.
- i. **Return to driving:** To return to driving you need to be off of pain medications and cleared for full weight-bearing. In general, the criteria are that you feel comfortable enough to brake suddenly and/or make evasive maneuvers in a vehicle if that was required. It is your responsibility to wait to drive until you feel comfortable to do so.

I. Rehabilitation Protocol 0-6 Weeks Post-Op

- a. Non weight bearing to the operative ankle for 6 weeks from the date of surgery (minimum). Use crutches for ambulation.
- b. Elevate as much as possible



- c. Approximately 2 weeks after surgery you will be switched into a CAM boot
 - i. After being placed into the CAM boot, come out of the boot 3-4x/day to work on range of motion exercises for the ankle. Move the foot up and down and side to side.
 - d. Start quad/hip/core strengthening
 - e. Isometric ankle strengthening
- II. 6-12 Weeks Post-Op**
- a. Advance to weight bearing as tolerated as directed
 - b. Continue to work on range of motion exercises for the ankle
 - c. Begin isotonic strengthening exercises for the ankle
 - d. Ankle proprioception
 - e. Modalities
 - f. Hip/Core/Hamstring/Quad progressive resistive exercises
 - g. Stationary bike/elliptical
 - h. Treadmill walking/stair climbing
- III. 12-16 Weeks Post-Op**
- a. Continue previous exercises
 - b. Advance stationary bike
 - c. Advance treadmill work
 - d. Begin jogging when cleared by Dr. Hazelwood
- IV. 16+ Weeks Post-Op**
- a. Continue previous exercises
 - b. Begin sport specific activities agility drills
 - c. Return to sports/high impact activities 4-6 months from date of surgery, depending upon function, range of motion, strength and healing as seen on post-operative radiographs