

Post-Operative Instructions: Achilles Tendon Repair

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1. Before you leave the hospital, you will be given a prescription for a pain reliever. This medication contains a narcotic with acetaminophen (Tylenol), so do not take any additional Tylenol. Use the medication as directed. You may take Tylenol instead of the prescription medication as the pain starts to dissipate.

2. If you have no history of stomach ulcers, frequent stomach upset, or intolerance to aspirin, I would like you to take 1 aspirin tablet (regular or 'baby' strength) once a day for 6 weeks. This will aid in the prevention of blood clots. You may substitute Ecotrin (coated aspirin), Bufferin, or Ascriptin. (Ibuprofen will not work.)

3. You should use your crutches at all times. You should put no weight on your operated foot. Excessive walking is not helpful for the first week after surgery as it causes more swelling.

4. When you return home, elevate the leg on some pillows. The pillows should be placed under the calf so that there is no pressure on the heel. The aim, if possible, is to keep the foot higher than the heart. When you sleep the leg need only be elevated two to three inches. Continue to elevate the leg at night until there is no swelling in toes.

5. Do not keep the leg in the same position on the pillow at all times. Instead, rotate or shift the leg to the right and to the left so that pressure on the leg is spread equally on all areas.

6. Keep the post-operative splint completely dry at all times. Wrap it securely with two layers of plastic bags when you bathe.

7. Call my office on the day following surgery to schedule a follow-up appointment for about 12 to 14 days after surgery.

8. Depending on the exact location of the Achilles tear and the strength of the repair at the time of surgery, you may be placed in a fiberglass cast at your follow-up visit. The cast will remain on for four weeks and you must put no weight on the cast. The cast must stay completely dry.

9. If the tendon repair was secure, then you will be placed in a special removable short leg brace at your follow-up visit. This brace has adjustable wedges placed under the heel. Initially, three or four wedges will be placed, and one wedge will be removed every 7 to 10 days. You will be instructed as to how to remove the first wedge yourself, and you will return for follow-up for removal of the next wedge. Keep the brace on at all times.

10. You can put partial weight on the leg in the brace with the crutches when there are one or two wedges remaining. You may remove the brace for bathing (shower only), but you should not put any weight on the leg. I suggest you use a shower stool.

11. If you have any of the following call me immediately at the office or via my answering service: calf or lower leg pains that make it difficult to walk; inordinate pain or undue swelling in the foot; bleeding through the dressing; numbness; coldness or tingling in the foot. If you cannot reach me go to the hospital's emergency room (or another hospital emergency room if you prefer) to have the problem checked.