

Ankle Arthroscopic Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

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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 when the local anesthetic begins to wear off and then as necessary. As the pain starts to dissipate you may take Tylenol instead of the prescription medication.

2. If you have no history of stomach ulcers, frequent stomach upset, or intolerance to aspirin, I would like you to take 2 aspirin tablets (regular strength) twice each day on a full stomach (*e.g.*, with breakfast and dinner) for 4 weeks. This will help reduce swelling and inflammation in the ankle and also aid in the prevention of blood clots. You may substitute Ecotrin (coated aspirin), Bufferin, or Ascriptin.

3. You must use your crutches at all times. Do not put any weight on the operated leg when walking. However, when you are standing still you may put weight on the leg. As your ankle range of motion improves during the weeks following surgery, you will be instructed to gradually begin applying weight while walking. You will need to use the crutches for at least 2 weeks – and possibly for as long as 4 to 6 weeks – following surgery.

4. When you return home, elevate the leg on some pillows. Place an ice bag over the dressing for about 20 minutes three or four times a day for the first 5 days. Continue to elevate the leg on pillows when you go to sleep until there is no swelling in the ankle or foot.

5. Begin ankle flexion exercises as soon as you are able: while sitting or lying down, flex the ankle, bringing your toes towards your knee. Repeat the exercise 10 to 15 times each hour. You should continue this exercise until your post-operative visit. After five days, add an exercise where you pull with a belt (or strap) around the front of the foot to further increase the motion.

6. The dressing put on in the operating room should remain in place for 48 hours. It must be kept dry when bathing. At 48 hours, you may remove the ace bandage and remove the padding and gauze dressings. You will see sutures in the skin. You may shower, but do not immerse or soak the leg (no baths). Pat the incisions dry. Apply antibiotic ointment (*e.g.*, Bacitracin) to each incision and cover with a “bandaid” or a sterile gauze pad. You may use the ace bandage if it makes you feel more comfortable.

7. Call my office on the day following surgery to schedule a follow-up appointment for about 10 days after surgery.

8. 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 ankle; 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.