

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING FOOT AND ANKLE SURGERY

PAIN MANAGEMENT

- If you have received a pain block, the pain relief can last from 4-36 hours. This also means you may not have sensation or movement in your foot/toes for the same amount of time.
- You will have pain after the pain block wears off. Anticipate this and start your pain medication prior to the block wearing off.
- It is important to control your pain after surgery. Take your first dose of the prescribed pain medication as soon as you get home, even if you have no pain.
- Continue to take your pain medication as prescribed for the first 48 hours after surgery. Make sure that you (the patient) are alert and are not having any difficulty breathing before taking the medication.
- You can expect the first night will be the most painful and uncomfortable if you have not had a pain block. You will have been given a strong medication to take home with you to make you as comfortable as possible, but you may still have some break through pain.
- After the first 48 hours, you may take the pain medication as needed for pain.

ANTIBIOTICS

- IV antibiotics are given at the time of surgery and are chosen based upon any allergies you may have. Normally, you will not be sent home with any antibiotics.

ACTIVITY

- **NO WEIGHT BEARING** on your operated leg for 2 weeks after surgery, unless you have been instructed otherwise by your physician or the clinical assistant when your surgery was scheduled. This means that your foot **MAY NOT** touch the ground when standing or walking.
- Elevate your leg on pillows to keep it at the level of your heart or above the level of your heart as much as possible during the first 14 days following surgery. Do this until you are seen by your doctor for follow up. The more you elevate your foot/ankle the more it will help to decrease the swelling and pain.
- Limit the amount of time your foot is down to 10 minutes or less each time.
- You should “listen” to your foot/ankle as to when to elevate again.
- Ice can be very helpful in decreasing the pain and swelling of the foot and ankle. Start by icing behind the knee for 20 minutes and then remove the ice for 20 minutes. Repeat this sequence. **DO NOT** place ice directly on your skin.
- Wiggle your toes at least every hour to maintain circulation.
- To keep your leg from becoming stiff, work at “setting.” That is, tightening, then relaxing the thigh muscles. Do this frequently, or every two hours while awake.

- At your follow up visit, your splint will be removed and you will get further instructions on how you will increase your activity.
- Remember: Do not do anything that hurts or makes your foot/ankle swell.

WOUND CARE

- You will probably wake up from surgery with a posterior splint that extends from below your knee to your toes. This needs to stay in place and be kept dry. You will follow up with the clinical assistant approximately two weeks after surgery and a cast or brace will be applied at that time.
- Bleeding through the dressings is quite common following surgery. This normally occurs for the first 1-2 hours after surgery. The actual bleeding has stopped by the time you see the drainage through the dressing.
- Your dressings need to be kept DRY at all times – DO NOT shower, bathe, or wet your dressings in any way.

TIPS ON CARING FOR YOUR SPLINT/CAST

- Avoid getting water on or in your cast. Moisture softens the cast and damp padding can cause irritation. If the cast or padding becomes damp, use a hair dryer on a cool setting to dry the area.
- Plastic bags are good covering in wet weather, but will not protect your cast if it is submerged in water.
- Do not swim with your cast.
- If the cast becomes rough on the edges, cover the rough area with smooth adhesive tape. Avoid wrinkles.
- Do not pull the cast padding out.

CARING FOR YOUR SKIN WHILE WEARING YOUR SPLINT/CAST

- Wash the skin around the cast taking care not to saturate the cast in the process.
- Lotion has a tendency to build up on the inside of the cast and become sticky, so it should never be used under or around the cast.
- If the edges of the cast are causing irritation to the skin, pad it with some soft material such as cotton or foam. Be sure the padding is well anchored to the cast and not bulky, as loose material slipping into the cast will cause even more irritation.
- If you notice any raw or open areas, call the office.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO WATCH FOR AND DO

- Severe swelling and/or pain in the leg or calf. This could indicate a blood clot in the leg.
- Profuse bleeding. If the bleeding continues to soak through your dressing and increases in size on your dressing.
- Blue or White toes. This indicates a lack of blood flow to the foot.
- Fever greater than 101.5. Fevers less than this are very common the first few days after surgery and are unlikely to indicate infection.
- Severe Pain. If your pain does not improve after pain medication, except for the first night after surgery.
- If you note any of the above problems or concerns, please contact our office, Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm at (616) 459-7101.