



Foot & Ankle Surgery

Planning and Recovery

Preparing for Foot & Ankle Surgery

Understand the Precautions Following Surgery

Speak to your doctor prior to surgery about what weight bearing restrictions you may have following your surgery. Some patients will be allowed to step on their affected ankle however some will not be allowed to place any weight on that ankle. Understanding the potential restrictions and the length of time you will be required to follow these restrictions will allow you to prepare for what is to come.

- ☐ **Weight Bearing As Tolerated:** You will be allowed to bear weight through your leg as you are able. You may have a post-operative shoe to assist with walking following surgery.
- ☐ **Partial Weight Bearing:** You will be allowed to place up to 50% of your weight through the affected ankle.
- ☐ **Toe Touch Weight Bearing or Flat Foot Weight Bearing:** You will be allowed to place your toes or your foot down on the ground to help you balance however you will not be allowed to bear pressure through that leg.
- ☐ **Non-Weight Bearing:** You will not be allowed to place any weight through your lower extremity on the affected side.

Assistive Devices & Walking Aids

There are many different devices that can assist you with walking following surgery. It is a good idea to trial the device if available. This will help you decide which device will allow you to limit weight bearing if necessary. If you are having difficulty using a device especially if you have been told you will need to maintain non-weight bearing, call your doctor to determine if a preoperative therapy session may be helpful. This equipment may be purchased at a local DME pharmacy or online.



Crutches



Front Wheeled Walker



Knee Scooter



Wheelchair

Please be sure to check out our educational videos for walking with a device and stair training.

Setting Up Your Environment and Preparing for After Surgery

- Move furniture to allow for more space.
- Pick up throw rugs.
- Check railings on the stairs to ensure they are secure. If you don't have railings, consider having railings installed.
- Check to see if your assistive device will fit through doorways around your home.
- Consider setting up a living area on the main level to limit stair use.
- Consider whether you may need equipment to help get on/off the toilet. Items available to assist include toilet riser, commode, grab bars, or a toilet safety frame.
- Consider getting a shower chair for use after surgery to avoid bearing weight on your ankle or consider sponge bathing.
- Move frequently used items in kitchen and bathrooms for easy access when using an assistive device.
- You may need to consider having a ramp installed if you are unable to maneuver the steps safely while maintaining weight bearing restrictions as indicated by your doctor.
- Buy baby aspirin, stool softener and any other over-the-counter medications you'll need ahead of time.

Planning for Help Following Surgery

You will be required to have a family member or friend spend the night following surgery. Recruit family or friends to assist with laundry, grocery shopping, and transportation for appointments and errands in the weeks following surgery. It is also recommended that you make arrangements for pets, mail, and trash if you live alone.

PreOp Foot Soak/Care Instructions

Following your surgical shower (instructions and soap kit given separately), please perform a chlorhexidine (the same soap) foot soak for five minutes, as long as you don't have an open wound on your foot or ankle. Remove all nail polish, shellac or other artificial substances from your feet.

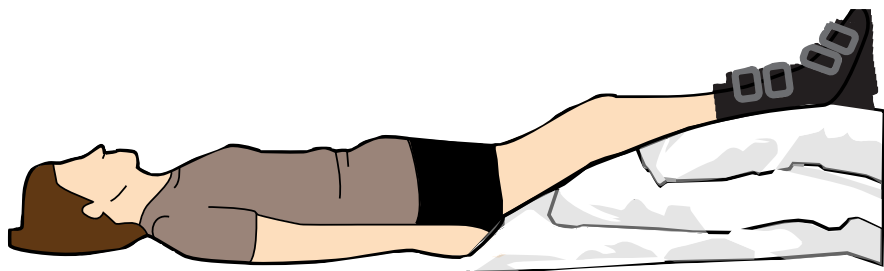
1. Gather a basin or bowl large enough to soak your entire foot up to the ankle in water.
2. Pour two capfuls of chlorhexidine soap into the basin.
3. Fill the basin with lukewarm water. Make sure it is submerged to the bottom of the ankle.
4. Soak for five minutes. Use a washcloth to gently clean between the toes.
5. Remove foot, rinse with clean water, and towel dry.

The morning of surgery, perform a second fully body chlorhexidine soap shower using the rest of the soap in the bottle. You do not need a second foot soak. Carefully trim nails 10 days before surgery and no later. Please wear clean socks over the foot. If unable to wear a shoe, please wear a clean sock.

Immediately Following Surgery

Wound Care, Elevation and Sleeping

Keep your dressing completely dry while in place. Some bloody drainage on or around the dressing is common. If it continues to develop after the first 48 hours, please call (402) 609-3000 and let us know. Swelling and bruising is also common within the first 3-7 days and can take several weeks before the swelling and bruising starts to go down. Ice and elevating your leg above the level of your heart will help, especially while sleeping. Multiple pillows also help with comfort.



Dressing Changes

- ☐ Keep the dressing dry and in place **at all times**.
- ☐ You may change the dressing in **7 days** and daily after that. Use dry gauze and ACE wrap for new dressings.
- ☐ You may change the dressing in **4 days** and daily after that. Use dry gauze and ACE wrap for new dressings.

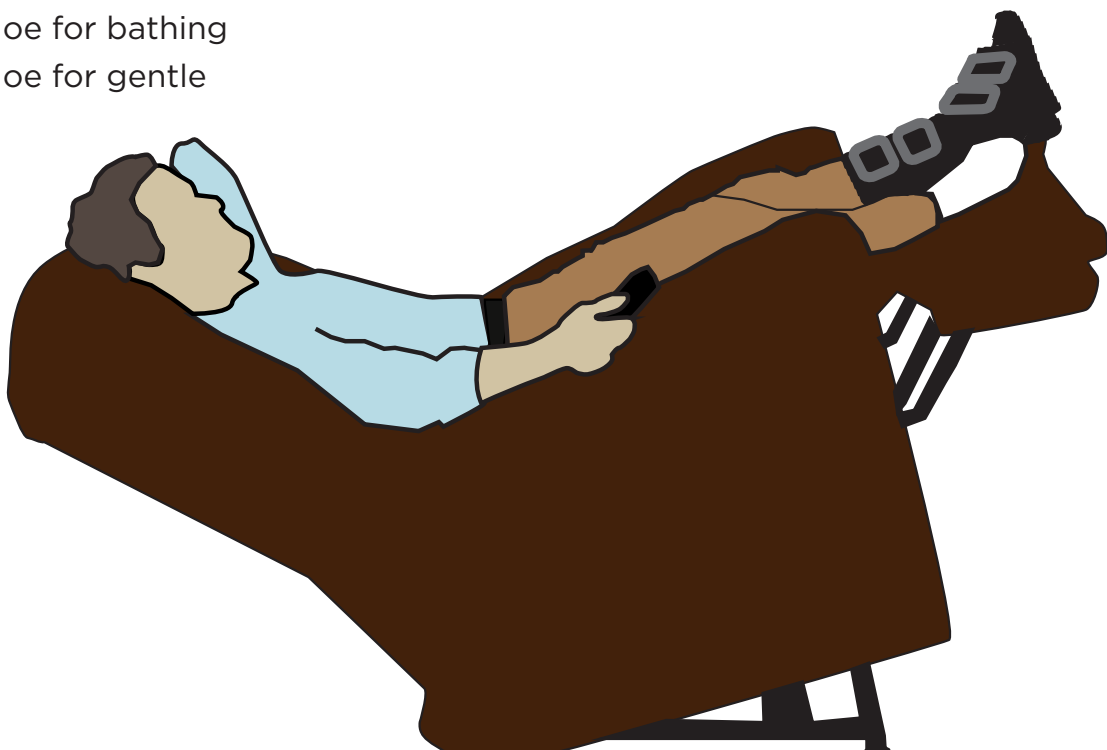
Showering

- ☐ You may begin showering at any time, but cover the dressing/splint to keep it dry.
- ☐ You may remove the dressing and get the incision wet starting in **7 days**.
- ☐ **Never submerge** the incision in bath water. Only allow shower water to rinse over the top of the incision.
- ☐ **Blot dry** with a clean towel and re-apply a clean dressing after showering.

Boot/Splint Instructions

- ☐ Do not remove boot/splint at any time
- ☐ May remove boot/post-op shoe at night
- ☐ May remove boot/post-op shoe for bathing
- ☐ May remove boot/post-op shoe for gentle range of motion exercises.

***Elevation** means having your foot above your heart. Reclining chairs alone are not sufficient, but using pillows works well. If you do not have a recliner, use pillows or the back of the couch to elevate.*



Pain

You will feel some pain or discomfort after surgery. Your surgeon and care team will be monitoring you closely and discussing options for pain management, including:

- **Change your activity.** If you are mobile and it hurts, you should rest. If immobilization has led to discomfort, get up and move around.
- **Ice the area.** Ice can help to bring down the swelling which lessens pain. We recommend using ice for 20-30 minutes to the affected area followed by 20-30 minutes of no ice.
- **Tylenol (acetaminophen).** This drug is believed to work on the same pain receptors as opioids, but without the side effects and addiction potential. We recommend you take the maximum safe amount of Tylenol (4000 mg daily) around the clock for a minimum of 2-4 weeks or as needed to give you a baseline level of pain relief. Your prescribed pain medication may contain Tylenol, and this should be accounted for in your maximum daily amount.
- **NSAIDS.** Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (Celebrex and Mobic) can decrease swelling around the surgical site, which may lessen the pain. Take it as prescribed.
- **Narcotic/opioid medication.** You will be given a prescription before leaving the hospital if narcotics are needed for pain. Typically, most patients require more in the first few days of recovery and then wean themselves down in the first week.

Driving

You may not drive for 24 hours after surgery. After that, you'll be instructed by your surgeon.

Follow Up Appointments

You will see your surgeon or their physician assistant within 2-3 weeks following surgery. You will receive education at this appointment about continued recovery goals and topics such as when you can return to work.

What Should I Watch for After Surgery?



Signs of Infections

- Fever 100.5 degrees or higher
- Increased redness, swelling, drainage, heat or foul odor around the incision site
- Increased pain not relieved by the pain medications prescribed by your surgeon
- Any part of your wound opening or separating



Signs of a Blood Clot

- Pain or tenderness in the calf of the surgical or nonsurgical leg
- Swelling or discoloration of the area



Signs a Blood Clot Has Traveled to Your Lungs

- Sudden onset of shortness of breath
- Sudden onset of chest pain

Notify your surgeon immediately if you have signs of a blood clot. Seek the nearest facility with an emergency room or call 911 if you have chest pain, shortness of breath or think a blood clot has traveled to your lungs.



OrthoNebraska Clinic (24/7 and on call)
OrthoNebraska Physical Therapy

(402) 609-3000, #1
(402) 609-1750

OrthoNebraska has several offices, some of which include orthopedic urgent care locations. Visit **OrthoNebraska.com** or call **(402) 609-3000** for more information.

OrthoNebraska Hospital meets the definition of a "physician-owned hospital" under 42 CFR 489.3. Nebraska Orthopaedic Hospital, LLC and OrthoWest, PC are each operating under the name OrthoNebraska. For more information, visit OrthoNebraska.com/legal.