



Eitan M. Ingall MD

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Patient Information for Foot and Ankle Surgery

ANKLE FUSION

Information: Ankle arthritis can be treated without surgery. If you decide to have surgery, a fusion is one option that can be performed. A fusion is where we remove the ankle joint and connect bones together. Patients may have other deformities and/or painful conditions that may be fixed at the same time. Often I will make a small incision on the side of your heel to remove bone graft from your heel bone to help the process fuse. Risks of surgery include, but are not limited to: infection, wound healing issues, scar, swelling, stiffness, pain, numbness, injury to vessels, bone healing problems, hardware problems/need for hardware removal, recurrence, other deformity, need for future surgery, perhaps a condition you may feel is worse or not much better from your preoperative status. If you need an excuse for work, please let us know before surgery. If it is your right ankle, most cannot drive for 8-12wks. Most are out of work at least 1 month, some 2-3 months.

On the day of surgery: You and your anesthesiologist will determine what is best for your particular surgery. Often, a block is provided by the anesthesiologist. This will decrease the amount of pain after surgery. The risks of anesthesia/block will be discussed with the anesthesiologist. You will be brought to the operating room and your leg will be cleaned for surgery. Drapes will then be placed over your leg and your entire body to keep our field clean. You will be given antibiotics before/during surgery. I will perform your surgery (perform an incision, perform the surgery as above and as we discussed in the clinic, fuse the ankle, add hardware, close the tissue/skin). I will place a splint on your leg which must stay on until your first visit. After surgery, I will discuss the surgery with your guest that day.

After Surgery: You will be taken to the recovery room and sent home when the nurses and anesthesiologist think you are suitable for discharge. You can use crutches, knee walker, walker, wheelchair, etc. After surgery, I will discuss the surgery with your guest that day.

Care of your splint/dressing and weightbearing: Please pay close attention to the discharge paperwork you receive about how to care for your splint/dressing. In order to ensure an optimal outcome, it is critical that you adhere to these recommendations. For example, if you have a splint, it must stay dry etc. Depending on your surgery, you may not be permitted to put weight on your leg etc. All of these details can be found in your discharge paperwork. Please do not leave the hospital/surgery center until you and your guest have full understanding of the post operative instructions. Please ask questions as they come up! We are here to help.

Medications – Please read this section carefully: After surgery, you will be prescribed a small dose of narcotic pain medication. All narcotics cause constipation, so I will provide you stool softener as well to try to help with this. Narcotics are dangerous medications with addictive potential. Furthermore, we now know that their ability to reduce pain may even be inferior to NSAIDs or other anti-inflammatory medication. We try to control pain using multiple pain pathways including narcotics (for a short time),

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ibuprofen and Tylenol. Other medications may be used in certain instances as well. **It is our commitment to you to help control your pain in a safe manner.**

These are the 5 medications I prescribe most patients after surgery:

- Colace – Stool softener twice daily
- Oxycodone- 5mg every 4-6 hours for severe pain
- Zofran – anti-nausea medication to be taken as needed
- Tylenol (usually 1000mg)
- Ibuprofen (usually 800mg)

And if you are having fracture or fusion surgery:

- Calcium
- Vitamin D

You should plan to take the oxycodone every 4-6 hours for the first 24 hours (especially as your block wears off). **I recommend the following schedule:**

Day 1 – Oxycodone 5mg every 4-6 hours

Day 2 – Oxycodone 5mg every 4-6 hours but skip the dose around lunchtime if you can

Day 3 – Oxycodone 5mg every 8 hours

Day 4 – Oxycodone 5mg twice, once in the morning and once at night

Day 5 – Oxycodone 5mg only at bedtime

Day 6 – Oxycodone 5mg only at bedtime

Day 7 – Stop narcotic pain medication (OK to take at bedtime if absolutely necessary)

This adds up to about 18 pills. For most surgeries, I will provide you with twenty pills. I do not provide refills for narcotics. This is because after about a week, they generally do not provide much benefit for pain relief and can become harmful (constipation, altered mental status, addiction).

In addition to the above schedule, you should take Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) along with Tylenol (Acetaminophen) in an alternating fashion for the first week after surgery:

06:00 – 800 mg Ibuprofen

09:00 – 1000 mg Tylenol

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12:00 – 800mg Ibuprofen

15:00 (3pm) – 1000 mg Tylenol

18:00 (6pm) – 800 mg Ibuprofen

21:00 (9pm) – 1000 mg Tylenol

This may be done for the full week after surgery. After one week, you can take the Tylenol or Ibuprofen as needed on a less frequent basis. Please note that if you have liver problems you should not take Tylenol. Also, some people cannot take Ibuprofen because of prior gastric bypass surgeries, stomach ulcers or other reasons. Ibuprofen can cause stomach pain and GI issues, and please alert our office if you develop any of these symptoms. Please let me know if you cannot take these medications and we will find suitable alternatives.

Postoperative Course:

1 wk – Myself or my team will see you for a wound check. You will be placed into another splint.

2 wks – Myself or my team will see you for splint and staple removal, xrays, and transition to cast

5 wks – You will return, repeat xrays and change to a tall walker boot and you can touchdown weightbear in the boot with crutches and advance weight 25% per week

8 wks – I will see you for repeat xrays and you can weightbear as tolerated in the boot and will receive a brace

10-16wks – You can start to transition out of the boot into comfortable footwear of choice with ankle brace

4-6 months – You will begin to feel that this is “behind you” and although you are not fully normal/healed, you should be doing quite well. It takes a full year to recover from an ankle fusion. Swelling is the last issue to resolve and can be 6-12 months for any ankle surgery. I’m happy to see you at any time during the scheduled visits or unscheduled visits if you have questions/concerns. *Thank you and I will take excellent care of you!*

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