



Eitan M. Ingall MD

*Baylor Scott and White Orthopaedic Associates of Dallas*

Patient Information for Foot and Ankle Surgery

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## **PILON FRACTURE**

**Information:** A pilon fracture is where the end of your tibia (shin bone) is shattered. Since it involves a severe injury to the ankle joint, it is a devastating injury. If surgery is required then the bone will be placed back into their proper position and hardware will be placed to hold it. Patients may have other conditions (cartilage injury, deformity, tendon injury, ligament injury, etc) that may be fixed also. 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. This is an injury to a joint, and will lead to joint arthritis; often treated with surgery in the future. There are many options but ankle fusion or replacement are the common final procedures. If you need an excuse for work, please let us know before surgery. If it is your right ankle, most patients cannot drive 8-12 wks.

**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, add hardware, close the tissue/skin, and then place a splint on your leg that must remain on until your first postoperative visit with me). 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 will be placed into a postoperative shoe or short walker boot. Often times you are allowed to walk in this device or put weight on the heel only.

**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), 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.**

Disclaimer: These are general statements and may not apply specifically to your care. I may modify as needed for your individual care.



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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

12:00 – 800mg Ibuprofen

15:00 (3pm) – 1000 mg Tylenol

18:00 (6pm) – 800 mg Ibuprofen

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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:**

2 wks – My team or myself will see you for splint and staple removal and placement of a tall walker boot or cast. If a cast, it will remain for another 4 wks. Physical therapy will begin and lasts 6-12 wks

10wks – You are allowed touchdown weightbearing in the boot with crutches and advance to full weightbearing over the next 2-4wks.

12-16 wks – You will remove the boot and wear comfortable shoes with supportive ankle brace

4-6 months – You continue to advance with activities

6-12 months – You will begin to feel that this is “behind you” and although you are not fully normal/healed, you should be doing better, understanding that this is a life-changing injury and your ankle may never be the same, unfortunately. Pilon fractures take a full year or more to recover from. 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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