

# Foot Surgery

## Why do I need foot surgery?

Your doctor has recommended foot surgery to fix a problem with the bones or tissue in your foot. Some common reasons for foot surgery include:

- A broken bone
- Damage to a joint due to osteoarthritis [ahss-tee-oh-arth-RITE-iss]
- A growth or deformity, such as a bunion (BUN-yun), hammer toe, or ganglion [GANG-gee-on] cyst
- Damage to muscle, tendons, or ligaments
- Problems with blood flow to your tissues

Each of these problems are repaired differently. Your surgeon will explain the exact procedure you will be having before your procedure.

## What do I need to do before foot surgery?

- **Make a list of all of your medicines and bring it to your surgery appointment.** Be sure to include all vitamins, herbal remedies, and over-the-counter drugs (such as allergy medicine or cough syrup) you are taking.
- **Follow your doctor's instructions concerning your medicines.** You may need to stop taking certain medicines a few days before surgery.
- **Follow all instructions on when to stop eating or drinking before your surgery.** This will help prevent anesthesia complications.
- **Arrange for someone to take you home after surgery.** Ask your doctor if you will need someone to help care for you after surgery.
- **Ask your doctor to explain all of the possible risks and complications of foot surgery.**



## When should I call my doctor?

After the surgery, call your doctor if:

- Your dressing gets loose or wet or comes off
- Your incision:
  - Is bleeding
  - Feels hot (like a sunburn)
  - Has increasing redness
  - Is draining pus
- You have a reaction to your pain medicine
- You have chills or a fever above 101° F (38° C)
- You have a lot of swelling in your lower leg (calf) above the surgery site
- You get cramping (charley horse) in the calf muscle
- You are short of breath

## What happens during foot surgery?

**You will be given anesthesia.** This is medicine that can put you to sleep or numb the area where you will have surgery. The type of anesthesia used depends on the surgery as well as your personal health and needs.

- **Local anesthesia.** This is also called an **ankle block**. It only numbs your foot.
- **Regional anesthesia.** This is also called a **popliteal** [pop-lit-TEE-uhl] **block**. Numbing medicine is injected into your leg behind the knee. It numbs your foot, ankle, and lower leg.
- **Spinal anesthesia (epidural).** A tiny catheter is placed in the area surrounding your spine (the dura). It numbs the area below your waist.
- **General anesthesia.** This is medicine that will put you to sleep.

Your anesthesiology provider will meet with you before surgery and stay with you during surgery to make sure you are comfortable.

Once the area is numb or you are asleep, the surgeon will make one or more incisions (cuts) in the skin near the area to be repaired. Depending on the type of surgery you are having, your doctor may:

- Take out or repair damaged tissue.
- Place pins or screws in a bone or joint to repair a fracture or to straighten a toe.
- Fuse (join) two or more bones together.
- Replace a damaged joint.
- Transplant bone or cartilage from one part of your body (**autograft**) or from another person (**allograft**) to your foot.

## What happens after foot surgery?

How well your foot heals depends a lot on how well you follow your doctor's instructions. After surgery:

- **Take all pain medicines exactly as prescribed by your doctor.** This will keep your pain from getting worse and make it easier to manage. **It will not take away your pain completely.** Pain medicine may cause constipation. You may need to take an over-the-counter stool softener or laxative.
- **Elevate (raise) your foot as much as possible.**
- **Use ice or cold packs to decrease pain and swelling.** Apply the ice to the surgical site for 20 minutes and then take it off for 20 minutes. (Never put ice directly on your skin.)
- **Do not walk on your foot until your doctor says it's okay.** You will have bandages (dressings) on your foot and may also have a cast, splint, or boot to hold your foot in place. Use crutches, scooters, walkers, and canes as instructed by your healthcare providers.

- **Do not get your foot wet until your doctor says it's okay.**
- **You can go back to your normal routine when your doctor says it's okay.**

Your healthcare providers may have other instructions for you to follow.

## Follow-up appointments

Be sure to go to all of your follow-up appointments so your doctor can see how your foot is healing. You may also need physical therapy. At physical therapy, you will learn specific exercises to strengthen your foot and help it move better.



### *My follow-up appointment*

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_



### *Questions for my doctor*

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