

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 I 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 or by your knee to remove bone graft from your heel bone to help the process fuse faster. 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 (make 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 boot 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. Some patients stay overnight if your surgery was performed at the hospital. You are not allowed to walk on the operative leg. You will be sent home on pain medicine with the hope that you can discontinue it as quickly as possible. You can use crutches, knee walker, walker, wheelchair, etc.

Postoperative Course:

2 weeks – Myself or my team will see you for x-rays and wound check. Often you will have your sutures removed and you will be given a wound care hand out.

4 weeks – You can touchdown weight bear in the boot with crutches and advance weight 25% per week.

8 weeks – I will see you for repeat x-rays and you can weight bear as tolerated in the boot and will receive a brace.

10 weeks – You can start to wean the boot into comfortable shoe wear with ankle brace.

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 12-18 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!*

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