

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, and 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 is 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 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 boot 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. 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 wks – I will see you for splint and suture removal.

6 wks – Repeat X-rays and Physical therapy will begin and lasts 6-12 wks. You are allowed touchdown weight bearing in the boot with crutches and advance to full weight bearing over the next 2-4wks.

12-16 wks – You will wean 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 this is a life-changing injury, and you and your ankle will never be the same unfortunately. Pilon fractures take a full year to recover from. Swelling is the last issue to resolve and can be 12-16 months for this 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.