

Post-Operative Instructions ORIF Ankle Fracture

➤ **Washing & Bathing:**

You should be careful to keep the splint clean and dry following surgery. Once your splint is removed, and you have your walking boot, it is OK to shower directly over your Steri- Strips (they won't come off for several days). The splint is used for up to 2 weeks after surgery, so be patient, it will be a while before you get that shower. In the interim, take care to prevent the splint from getting wet while bathing, water will make the otherwise strong plaster soft and weak. Once you begin showers, it is also OK to use soap on your leg and over the Steri-Strips. This shower should be quick. You may not go into a swimming pool, lake, or ocean unless specifically given permission. The yellow discoloration you will find on your leg is a long lasting surgical prep called DuraPrep. This is used because it will kill bacteria on your skin hours longer than old fashion iodine surgical preps. This yellow discoloration will not come off with soap and water. You will need rubbing alcohol to remove it. This can be done the day after surgery, unless it is causing your leg to itch, then it can be removed sooner.

➤ **Ice & Elevation:**

One important goal following surgery is to minimize swelling around the ankle. The best way to achieve this is with the frequent application of ice and by keeping the leg elevated. Apply Ice every 2 hours for 20 minutes. This is most important the first 48 hours following surgery. It is important to keep the entire leg elevated on a couple of pillows.

➤ **Walking & Crutches:**

Your activity and weight bearing are restricted after surgery. Before leaving the hospital you should have been taught how to use crutches or a walker. The goal is to not put any weight on the injured leg. You will be non-weight bearing for at least 4 weeks after surgery, however exactly when this is permitted is different for each patient and largely depends on the severity of the injury.

➤ **MEDICATIONS**

- Pain medication is sometimes injected into the wound and ankle joint during surgery - this will wear off within 8-12 hours.
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time - this can be taken as per directions on the bottle.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation - to decrease the side effects, take medication with food - if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative.
- If you are having problems with nausea and vomiting, contact the office to possibly have your medication changed (989-583-7450)
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication
- **Start taking baby aspirin (81 mg) daily** until the sutures are removed in the office. This may lower the risk of a blood clot developing after surgery. Should severe calf pain occur or significant swelling of calf and ankle, please call the doctor.
- **Ibuprofen 400-600mg (i.e. Advil)** may be taken in between the narcotic pain medication to help smooth out the post-operative 'peaks and valleys', reduce overall amount of pain medication required, and increase the time intervals between narcotic pain medication usage

EMERGENCIES**

- Contact Dr. Kerns' Office at 989-583-7450 if any of the following are present:
 - Painful swelling or numbness
 - Unrelenting pain
 - Fever (over 101° - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
 - Redness around incisions
 - Color change in extremities
 - Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Excessive nausea/vomiting

**If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the main office number at 989-583-7450, you will be connected to our on call Nurse can then contact the Doctor on Call if warranted. Do NOT call the hospital or surgery center.

**If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS

- You will be seen in our office 2-3 days following surgery for a wound check, and then another 1 week later for suture removal.
- If you have additional questions that arise at any time for Dr. Kerns or in general, please call the Office at 989-583-7450.