

ANKLE FUSION (ARTHRODESIS)



SURGERY INFORMATION



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THE SURGERY

- The surgery involves making the ankle joint bones into one bone in the correct position
- The bones need to be held in this position with fixation, which can be plates or screw, a rod or an external device (circular frame)
- Sometimes the outside bone (the fibula) is removed and used as bone graft as the fibula is no longer needed if the bone is fused
- Xrays are used in theatre to make sure the bones are aligned correctly, and there is a tourniquet placed around the thigh to help with bleeding



THE HOSPITAL STAY

- Unless you have a circular frame, you wake up with a **half plaster (backslab)** or a boot
- Your foot will be **elevated** overnight, and you have antibiotics through a drip
- You will need blood thinning medications to prevent blood clots and vitamin C to help wound healing for **6-8 weeks**
- You will stay in hospital for **2-5 days** with antibiotics, blood thinners, regular paracetamol, regular laxatives, and stronger pain killers to take if and when required
- You will need antibiotics as prescribed until the wound heals
- You will need a vacuum dressing attached to a machine until the wound heals
- A nurse will change this dressing in a week
- You will be only allowed to **touch your foot** to the ground for 6 weeks
- Depending on your balance and strength, you may need **rehabilitation** post operatively
- Buying a second hand **knee scooter** pre operatively (can search online) and practicing at home before the surgery, can be helpful; please bring it into the hospital with you. It is easier to use a knee scooter than crutches

WHEN YOU GO HOME

- You will need **medications for pain relief**; regular paracetamol (2 tablets four times a day) is recommended, as well as strong pain killers, especially at night before bed. These can have side effects of drowsiness, nausea and constipation, and other tablets to help with these side effects may be required.
- You will need blood thinning medications for 12 weeks to prevent blood clots
- You will need to take vitamin C 1g daily for 12 weeks
- You will need to take antibiotics as prescribed until the wound heals
- You will need a **shower chair** and bags to keep the plaster dry
- You will need to attend your post op appointment in 2-3 weeks where the wounds will be checked; if the wound is healed, the dressing will be changed to a dry dressing
- After this you will be able to shower with a shower chair out of the boot

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REHABILITATION

All patients are different. These timelines are only a guide, and some patients may progress faster or slower than others.

0-2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You will be in a backslab or a boot for 2-3 weeksYou will only be allowed to touch your foot to the ground for balance.Please keep your foot elevated and out of bed for toilet onlyYou will need to bag the leg for showersPlease take antibiotics, blood thinning medications, vitamin C and pain killers as prescribed
2-3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Post op appointment for a wound reviewThe vacuum dressings will be changed to dry dressings if the wound is healedYou will go into a full cast or a boot full time for another 3-4 weeksYou will still need to elevate the foot at rest
6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You will have a post op xrayYou can start weightbearing in a boot for 6 weeksYou can continue static/isometric strengthening
12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You will have another xray; if xrays show fusion, then you can start weight bearing without the bootYou will still have ongoing swelling so you may not fit into normal shoes, but you can wear normal shoes if you can fit into them (It would be good to wear rocker bottom shoes with a lace up ankle brace post operatively)You can start swimming and cycling
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You will have another xray; if the ankle is fused, you can commence normal activitiesYou may have ongoing intermittent swelling for several months

WHEN CAN I DRIVE?

- Left foot 6 weeks (if driving an automatic)
- Right foot 12 weeks

WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

- Seated work at 2-3 months
- Prolonged standing 9-12 months
- Heavy labour work 12-18 months

WHAT CAN GO WRONG?

- Anaesthetic problems
- Wound/scar problems
- Nerve/vessel/tendon injury
- Blood clots
- Infection
- Stiffness
- The fusion does not heal (non union)
- The fusion heals in the wrong position (malunion)
- Ongoing pain/swelling
- Chronic Regional Pain syndrome
- Arthritis in neighbouring joints
- The need for further surgery

CONTACT

If you want more information, or have any questions or problems, please contact Dr Graff on admin@christygraft.com or please call the rooms on **0493 461 133**