

Post-op Instructions for Lower Extremity Fracture with External Fixator

These instructions are to compliment the information given by your surgeon, the nursing staff and physical therapists. They cover many of the common questions.

WOUND CARE

Dressings are to be kept clean and dry. A small amount of clear drainage or bleeding is normal. If the ace wrap feels too tight, you may loosen it and re-wrap it.

The ace wrap and any pin site bandages should remain on until you follow-up in the clinic with your surgeon. If the pin sites are saturated or draining, the bandages can be exchanged for clean and dry bandages.

When showering, please place a plastic bag over the leg up to the thigh and secure it with tape, or wrap your leg with Glad Press & Seal plastic wrap. Pat the area dry immediately with a clean towel if it does get slightly wet or you may use a blow dryer on cool to dry.

PAIN/SWELLING

To lessen pain and swelling, you may ice after surgery. Put the ice in a zip lock bag or in a towel and place above and below the surgical site. Do not place ice or cooling devices directly on the skin for prolonged periods of time as it may damage the skin. We recommend 20 minutes, 4-5 times per day for the first 1-3 days.

Narcotic pain medication might be prescribed for use, if needed, after you leave the hospital in limited amounts. Try to wean down/off as soon as you are able. Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen or Aleve) as main medications for pain control as/if appropriate. Add the narcotic medication for additional pain control if needed. It can help to stagger your pain medications. If a refill of medication is needed, please call the office during regular business hours, Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. In general, refills will not be made after hours or on the weekends as they need to be picked up. Please plan ahead.

Also narcotic medications can cause constipation so you may want/need to use over the counter stool softeners/laxatives as needed.

Swelling to some degree is common after surgery. To reduce swelling, elevation is very helpful. Elevate the foot above the heart level for the first 2-5 days after surgery. Elevation for 30 minutes every 2 hours is a good initial recommendation. Excessive pain and swelling should be reported to your surgeon.

EXERCISES

Crutches are required following surgery. You should not put weight on the surgical leg until otherwise instructed by physical therapy or your physician.

FOLLOW-UP

Make sure an appointment has been scheduled for you for approximately 10-14 days after surgery.

Nathan Harris, MD
Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine
(715) 832-1400