



How to Prepare Myself for a Foot or Ankle Surgery

1. Understanding of my conditions and treatment options

This is probably the most important aspect of surgical preparation. The patient should have a complete understanding of the illness affecting the condition of your foot or ankle. Discussion should have been made with your surgeon regarding treatment options, risks, benefits, outcomes, and recovery. Surgery is a teamwork between care providers, patients, and family support.

2. Understand my responsibility

The patient should communicate with the insurance carrier to estimate financial responsibility which may vary depending on specific policies. The patient should communicate with human resources at work to prepare for a medical leave if needed. The patient may need to arrange for help in strenuous activities such as farming, mowing, snow removal, etc.

3. Medical clearance before surgery

At a minimum, the patient should communicate with a family care provider regarding the upcoming surgery. Often, a documented approval from a family care provider is required to ensure safety for surgery. There may be some laboratory work required in the process such as blood tests, urine tests, EKG, or additional imaging studies.

4. Medical Optimization

There are certain medical conditions, such as diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, and others that may negatively affect healing from foot or ankle surgery. Your surgeon may ask you to work with other healthcare providers to get these conditions under control prior to proceeding with surgery.

5. Quit smoking at least a month before surgery

Smoking can lead to complications after a surgery such as chronic pain, infection, wound breakdown, poor bone healing, loss of limb, and death. The patient should quit smoking cigarettes including all other products containing nicotine such as cigars, tobacco, vapes, and nicotine gums for at least a month before surgery. Smoking can be resumed with an approval from the surgeon after the recovery is complete.

6. Quit certain medications ahead of time

Certain medications can affect the success of surgery as shown below. The patient should discuss with the surgeon if there is a concern.

- Blood thinner/Aspirin/ and Anti-inflammatory medications: this may increase risk of bleeding from surgery.

- Immunosuppressive drugs and steroids: this may increase risk of infection.

- Pain medication: This will make pain control more difficult after surgery especially if the patient has developed a tolerance for narcotics.

7. Physical therapy for gait training before surgery

Foot and ankle surgery usually affects walking ability to a certain extent. The patient may need to use a cane, a walker, crutches, a knee scooter, or a wheelchair for a period of time. It is usually best to start the physical therapy for gait training well ahead of time to minimize falls and difficulties after surgery.

8. Prepare your companion on the day of surgery

The patient will need a dependable adult companion that can spend the day of surgery with the patient helping with transportation, obtaining medication, and basic care. This person will participate in the discussion about post-surgical care with the surgeon.

9. Stop eating or drinking after midnight

To avoid getting sick during surgery, no drinking or eating is allowed after midnight. The patient can usually resume eating immediately after awakening from anesthesia.

10. Arrive on time for surgery

Arrival on time on the day of surgery is critical. Being late for surgery may lead to cancellation of the case due to inadequate time allocated. Make sure to keep your phone accessible on the day before surgery and the surgery day so nursing staff can communicate with the patient regarding a possible change in arrival time.

11. What happens after surgery?

Most of the patients can go home after a foot or ankle surgery. A large surgical reconstruction may require the patient to come to one of the hospitals for surgery and stay in-patient afterwards. The patient and a companion will be informed about how the surgery went, post-surgical care, activities, medication, follow-up appointment, and a call-back number if there is any issue.

