



**Post-operative Foot and Ankle Surgery Instructions and Tips for Pain Control
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Non-medication Interventions

- Read your post-operative instruction handout!
- Elevate the leg at the heart level 95% of the time for the first 2-3 days.
- Limit the amount of time the foot and ankle are “down” for no more than 10 minutes at a time the first few days.
- Ice consistently for the first 2-3 days.
 - If on bare skin or a thin dressing, limit icing to 20 minutes per hour.
 - If around a splint, apply the ice behind the knee for 20 minutes per hours or over the splint around the ankle as much as tolerated.
- Do not plan extra activity for the first 2-3 days after surgery.
- Expect the foot or ankle will be painful – surgery hurts! The pain will get better. Trust the process.

Non-opiate Medications

Start these medications right away after you get home from surgery and continue on a regular schedule for at least 3 days. As you pain allows, start to use as needed until your first clinic visit after surgery. It may be helpful to alternate the ibuprofen/Celebrex and Tylenol to maximize pain relief. In rare cases, I may recommend avoiding ibuprofen or aleve after surgery – this will be made clear at the time of surgery.

- Motrin or Advil (ibuprofen) 600mg every 6 hours OR Celebrex 100mg every 12 hours.
- Tylenol (acetaminophen) 650mg every 6 hours.

- Neurontin (gabapentin) 300mg every 8 hours for the first 3 days only.

- Hydroxyzine 25mg (or 10mg if >65 years of age) every 6 hours.

Opiate Medications

These medications should be used sparingly, just as needed, and for the first few days after surgery. Please see the below guidelines for details.

- Ultram (tramadol) 50mg, 1-2 tablets every 4 hours as needed.
OR
- Oxycodone 5mg, 1-2 tablets every 3 hours as needed.

Opiate pain medications can be very effective, but carry a number of potentially harmful side effects including tolerance and addiction if used inappropriately. They will be the most effective the first few days following surgery in the following situations:

- If you had a nerve block before surgery, take one pill a few hours after you get home from the surgery center. Keep to a regular schedule with the medication, taking just one pill every 4 hours until the block wears off (tingling, pins and needles, increased movement in the toes, increased pain, etc.). Take 1-2 pills again 4 hours later.

- Take 1-2 pills at bedtime the first few days after surgery to help sleep and limit pain through the night.
- Take 1-2 pills for “rescue” when pain is not controlled by the regularly scheduled medications and non-medication interventions.
- You should generally feel less need for the opiate pain medication after the first few days after surgery. Remember, foot and ankle surgery hurts! The goal of medication management is to “take the edge off” and keep the pain level tolerable. Trust the process – the pain will get better!

Multiple studies indicate that opioid pain medication is not needed beyond a few days postoperatively and prolonged use of these medications can actually lead to increased perception of pain and tolerance/addiction issues. The CDC and state boards have been recommending and enforcing restrictions on opioid prescribing in light of the significant consequences that arise from chronic opioid use and TCO is adopting many of these recommendations for your safety and well-being.

1. Helmerhorst *et al*, Satisfaction with Pain Relief After Operative Treatment of an Ankle Fracture, *Injury*. 2012; 43(11):1958-61.
2. Helmerhorst *et al*, Pain Relief After Operative Treatment of an Extremity Fracture, *JBJS Am*. 2017; 99:1908-15.
3. Lovecchio *et al*, Support for Safer Opioid Prescribing Practices, *JBJS Am*. 2017; 99:1945-55.
4. Robbins *et al*, Liposomal Bupivacaine in Forefoot Surgery, *Foot Ankle Int*. 2015; 36(5):503-7.
5. YaDeau *et al*, Addition of Pregabalin to Multimodal Analgesic Therapy Following Ankle Surgery, *Reg Anesth Pain Med*. 2012; 37(3):302-7.