



General Recovery Timeline

Ankle Fractures and Ankle Replacement

Dr. Marcus J. Mittelsteadt

0-2 WEEKS

- You will be discharged home in a splint or a boot. You will be Non-weight bearing during this time. You must keep your splint/dressings clean and dry.
 - Hint: It's a good idea to get your house ready before surgery to allow for an easy transition home after surgery. Remember you will be using crutches, a knee scooter, or a walker to get around! This could mean getting extra help, sleeping and living primarily on the main level, having a ramp to get in the door, installing extra handrails in the bathroom, etc***
- At 10-14 days, you will follow up with your surgery team. **If you don't have an appointment at this time postop, call your team.** At this appointment you will have your staples removed, likely get x-rays, and go over further instructions.

2 weeks: Follow-up with your surgeon's team

2-6 WEEKS

You will be placed in a cam boot during this time. You will be encouraged to do gentle ankle motion. **Goals** during this phase of recovery are to work on ankle motion and continue to work on improving your swelling. Massage of the foot/ankle, wrapping with an ace wrap or compression stocking, and elevation are some strategies that can help.

2-4 Weeks

- You will remain completely non-weight bearing during this time. You will need crutches, knee scooter, or walker to keep from putting weight on your leg.
- If you need to balance, you should rest your foot on your heel while in the boot. You should not put your foot flat on the ground!!
- When you are relaxing, you should take your boot off and work on gentle ankle motion
- You will benefit from continuing to elevate
- You should keep your boot on while sleeping during this time
- You may get your incisions wet, but do not soak or scrub them

If you have been given lifts in your boot, you should remove one lift at 4 weeks

4-6 WEEKS

- You may put your foot on the ground for balance when in the boot, but should NOT*** bear full weight through your foot
- When you are relaxing, you should take your boot off and work on gentle ankle motion
- You will benefit from continuing to elevate
- You may sleep without the boot
- You may now soak your incisions but do not scrub unless your team says otherwise

If you have been given lifts in your boot, you should remove the final lift at 6 weeks

6 weeks: Follow up with your physician

6 -12 WEEKS

6-8 weeks:

- You will be allowed to weight-bear with your foot flat on the ground while wearing the boot. You may need crutches or a walker to help you balance.
- If you have significant pain while weight-bearing flat, return to weight bearing through your heel or not weight-bearing at all.

8-12 weeks:

- You will begin to wean out of the boot into a normal shoe or sandal. You should do this to comfort. You may need crutches to help you as you first wean out. You may need the boot for longer periods of activity for several weeks.
- You will be offered physical therapy at this time. **We recommend PT to help with regaining motion, balance, and strength. But also to help with swelling!**
- **You will be given an ankle brace.** You should wear this until 10-12 weeks post-op. You can transition out of it as pain and strength improve

12-16 weeks:

- Gradual return to most work activities
 - **Hint: Be Prepared. You may require more breaks or periods of sitting while you return to work*****
- Continue to work on strength, balance, gait, and swelling!!
- Brace is optional but some patients find it helpful

4 months: Follow up with your physician for x-rays/review

12 WEEKS – 6 MONTHS

- You will continue to work on swelling, motion, strength, and balance.
- At this time, your bones are healed and it is safe to ease back in to normal activity
 - Hint: Make sure that you build back the necessary strength before returning to higher level activities. Returning to normal activities without regaining strength and balance can lead to injury***
- You will notice that with longer periods of activity that you may experience swelling and soreness.
 - **Hint: Be aware that it is normal for up to a year to have color changes and swelling to your foot/ankle. Patients can notice their foot may appear purple or red - - this will typically improve with elevation. You may also notice changes in weather or temperature*****

6 months: *Optional Follow-up with your physician

6-12 MONTHS

- Continue to work on swelling, range of motion, and strength
- You will notice pain and swelling continuing to improve. This can take 12 months to fully resolve
- Return to all normal activities, including any athletic activities that you have not yet returned to

12 months: *Optional follow-up with your physician