

## What Does My Recovery Look like?

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### GENERAL RECOVERY PRINCIPLES

\*\*\*It is important to remember that most foot and ankle surgeries have a total recovery time of 6-12 months\*\*\*

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Generally speaking, this means that you can see improvements in pain, swelling, or stiffness for up to 12 months postoperatively (sometimes longer!!)

### THERE ARE 3 GENERAL PHASES OF RECOVERY:

#### **Early Recovery 0-4 months:**

During this time your body is recovering from the insult of surgery, working on healing skin, bones, and tissues, and beginning to regain some of the motion. **It takes 3 months to completely heal bone on average!** So, you can imagine how much work your body is doing during this time!

- During this phase, foot and ankle patients will often be surprised at the amount of swelling – **this is normal!** For example, it can sometimes be hard to fit in to your normal shoe ware. **This will get better!**
- You will have pain that turns into achiness during this phase.
- You will feel stiff and sore. **IT IS CRITICAL** to do any therapy prescribed by your physician during this phase. This will help you regain the motion you need to get back to your life.

#### **Middle Recovery 4-8 months:**

During this time, your bones have typically healed. Your body is now working on healing the tissues around your bones and resolving the extensive inflammatory process that an injury or surgery incites.

- During this phase, you and your body are working hard to regain the motion and strength you lost during surgery. Your muscles building back strength and are learning to work again in concert with one another. You may feel like your strength, balance, and gait are not normal to start. This should begin to normalize during this phase.
- You will still have swelling and achiness. As this phase progresses, these symptoms will become more and more activity related. Patients will notice that the more active they are, the more swollen and sorer they become. This is **NOT** dangerous, its part of your recovery!

- ❖ Common patient observations include swelling when foot is down, soreness at the end of the day or prolonged activity, **color changes (red or purple)** to the foot if it is down for long periods of time.
- Typically, patients will return to work and normal activity some time during this part of the recovery, if not earlier. Return to athletic activities are injury and surgery specific so ask your doctor!

**Late Recovery 8-12 months:**

During this time, your body is putting the finishing touches on resolving inflammation and pain. It is also getting stronger as your muscles begin to work more and more normally!

- During this phase your swelling will gradually resolve. You may notice some residual swelling until 12 months. You will have aches and pains, but these will continue to improve.
- During this time, you are typically returning to higher level activities, including athletic activities. Again, return to athletics is surgery specific, so, ask your doctor!
- Typically, patients GRADUATE from our care. Patients will return to normal life and seek out our team as needed for questions and concerns!