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Post-operative Instructions after Forefoot Surgery

After your surgery has been completed, you will be accompanied to the recovery room where you will spend the next hour recovering from the anesthesia. Depending on the type of surgery you had, the anesthesiologist may administer a popliteal block. This usually happens about an hour after surgery and can be helpful for further post-operative pain relief. Before going home, you will receive a post-op shoe to wear, a prescription for pain medication, and instructions from the nurses.

The First 24 Hours

Once you are home after the operation, REST. It is important to keep your foot elevated above heart level and to keep an ice bag on the foot to help decrease post-operative swelling. There will be an ACE wrap on top of the surgical dressing to keep pressure on the incisions and to minimize bleeding. It is important to REMOVE THE ACE WRAP 6 HOURS AFTER THE SURGERY.

Once you are situated at home, try to eat something if you can. This will prevent you from having an empty stomach when you begin taking pain medication.

ONCE YOU THINK THE FOOT IS BEGINNING TO HURT, START THE PAIN MEDICATION. It is important to stay ahead of the pain, rather than trying to catch up once the pain is unbearable. If you had a popliteal block after surgery, you may find that you do not need pain pills until 12 to 24 hours after the operation. Start taking the pain medication once the block wears off.

A small amount of blood on the surgical dressing is normal as long as it stops. If the bleeding continues or if the toes are cold and blue, contact the office or the physician-on-call. PLEASE REMEMBER TO CALL THE OFFICE ON THE SAME DAY AS YOUR SURGERY TO SCHEDULE AN OFFICE VISIT ON THE FOLLOWING DAY.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How much activity am I allowed?

You may put as much weight as feels comfortable on the operated foot while wearing the post-op shoe. However, it is advisable for the first few days to keep the foot elevated as possible to minimize pain and swelling.

How much pain medicine can I take?

The most common narcotics prescribed after foot surgery are Percocet and Vicodin. Both of these may be taken 1 to 2 tablets every 4 hours as needed for the pain. If you should experience significant nausea or an allergic reaction, please contact the office or the physician-on-call.

What should I eat?

You can begin eating whatever you think you can tolerate. It is probably wise to start with liquids and if they stay down, to progress to solid foods.

What about bathing and sleeping?

To take a bath or shower, protect the operated foot with a clean plastic bag taped around the leg and avoid getting it wet. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ALWAYS KEEP THE SURGICAL DRESSING CLEAN AND DRY. If your dressing gets wet, use a blow dryer to dry it. If it is too wet, come in for a dressing change. For sleeping, a cardboard box at the foot of your bed with one end cut out can help keep the blankets off your feet. The post-op shoe should be worn during the day at all times to protect the surgery that has been done.

When is my next appointment?

You should call the day of your surgery for an office appointment the following day. Typically on that visit, the compressive bandage is removed and a lighter dressing is applied. Pain control is assessed and adjusted as needed. A second appointment will be made for you about a week later to remove the stitches and to check an x-ray. The dressing changes and activity level will be advanced depending on the type of surgery you had.