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Frequently Asked Questions - Reconstructive Foot or Ankle Surgery

1. *When will I be able to drive?*

To drive safely, you should be off narcotic pain medication and be safe walking with crutches or walker in a regular shoe.

Cars with Automatic Transmission:

RIGHT Foot: You must be able to push hard against a break pedal without hesitation and out of your boot. This is typically 9 – 10 weeks following your surgery.

LEFT Foot: You may be able to drive as early as 2 weeks following your surgery if you can ambulate safely using crutches or walker. You must be able to get in and out of your car without putting pressure on your left foot.

Cars with Manual Transmission:

Not recommended until 9 – 10 weeks following your surgery.

2. *When can I fly?*

In general, flying is not recommended for 4 weeks following your surgery. The concerns are the demands of extensive walking/standing/waiting at the airport and the long periods of immobility in the airplane can result in a blood clot.

3. *After my surgery, can I put weight on my heel for balance?*

Specific instructions will be discussed prior to your surgery and specified on your discharge papers. Whether you can bear weight or not is a critical element of your recovery. Follow your instructions carefully.

4. *When can I soak my foot?*

Dr. Ghalambor will advise you when you may do this, but typically it is no earlier than 2 weeks after the wounds are completely dry.

5. *Is it OK to use lotion?*

You cannot use a lotion until all the wounds are healed and dry.

6. *Do I sleep in the brace? Is it ok to take it off other than when I shower?*

The brace is a substitute for a short leg cast. Keep the brace on except for bathing and dressing and until you are cleared to remove it by Dr. Ghalambor. This is usually 8 – 10 weeks after surgery.

7. *Will my foot or ankle swell after surgery? For how long? Do I use heat or ice?*

Your foot or ankle may swell for 3 to 4 months. Ice and elevation will help decrease the swelling.

8. *Will it hurt when the stitches come out?*

Suture removal may be mildly painful, but generally well tolerated.

9. *How will I know if my foot or ankle is infected?*
An increase of pain, swelling, redness, drainage and/or a fever are signs of possible infection. Contact Dr. Ghalambor immediately – (916) 454-6677.
10. *Will my calf and thigh shrink? What can I do to keep the strength up?*
Yes, your calf and thigh will atrophy due to lack of use. This should return with your post-operative rehabilitation. Your Physical Therapist may suggest some exercises during your recovery period; these are individual programs and should not be attempted without first discussing them with your therapist.
11. *I have stairs in my house; is that a problem?*
You should avoid stairs if possible. If this is impossible for you, it is safest to go up and down in a sitting position; you will need assistance to get upright when you complete the stairs. Please note that the worst accidents occur attempting to go down stairs in an upright position. You should also avoid escalators; always use the elevator.
12. *Do I need a DMV placard for handicap parking?*
It is a good idea to get a placard for 3 – 4 months following your surgery. Please ask for an application form at your pre-operative visit. You can obtain the placard the same day by going directly to the DMV; applying by mail may take up to 6 weeks.
13. *If I fall, how do I get up?*
Most people will need assistance to get up, as you may not put any weight on your operated foot.
14. *Are there things I can do to set up my house prior to surgery?*
- Carrying things are difficult when using crutches or a walker. You should use covered cups or glasses with a handle.
 - A prescription for a wheelchair may be provided if requested.
 - It is helpful to position a chair in your kitchen or bathroom for kneeling or resting when you are preparing things or getting dressed.
 - Using a bath chair will assist in bathing. You must be very careful when stepping over a bathtub side so as not to put any weight on your foot or ankle.
 - Plan for wide-legged pants or shorts while you have your boot. Jeans will not fit over your boot. You may wear your pants inside your boot if necessary.
 - A sturdy, comfortable shoe, such as a tennis shoe, should be worn on your non-surgical foot. This will help to keep you from slipping or falling. When you begin walking in a regular shoe, you may need to wear a larger shoe on your operative foot until the swelling subsides.
 - You may wash the liner in the boot if needed.

Our goal is to protect you AND your surgery.