



General measures during recovery from foot and ankle surgery

0-2 Weeks after surgery

1. Elevate your foot
 - Try to get your toes above the level of your heart whilst you are recovering. Simple ways to achieve this are:
 - i. Lying on a sofa with your foot on a pillow at the end of the sofa.
 - ii. Placing pillows under the end of your mattress to lift your foot at night.
 - Why elevate?
 - i. In the first 2 weeks after surgery elevation will help minimise pressure on your surgical wound which helps it heal.
 - ii. The more your foot is elevated the less it should hurt.
 - Avoid situations where your foot is down for long periods such as sitting in a chair or standing for more than 10 minutes at a time.
2. Minimise your activity
 - You should only be walking for essential activity in the first few weeks after surgery.
3. Keep your leg moving
 - After surgery you should try to gently move all parts of your leg.
 - Any areas which need protecting will have been immobilised during the surgery using bandages, wires or a plaster cast where necessary.
 - Any part of your leg which is able move should be kept moving.
4. Keep your foot dry
 - In order to keep your foot healthy inside dressings you must keep it dry. You can consider using a product such as a limbo (<https://limboproducts.co.uk>) to help.
5. Get some help
 - The early recovery after most foot and ankle surgeries can be debilitating and you may need extra help at home with normal daily tasks.



2-6 weeks after surgery

1. Clinic review

- After most surgeries you will be seen in outpatient clinic at two weeks in order to check the surgical scar is healing, and to review the plan for your future recovery.
- Surgical wounds take around 2 weeks to heal but can take longer. This depends on the type of surgery and your general state of health as well as whether or not you smoke. Smoking delays wound healing and increases the chances of your wound breaking down.

2. Bathe your foot and massage the scar

- If your wound is healing well at two weeks, and you have had a surgery where it is appropriate to do so, then it will be safe to bathe the foot. This is something you should discuss at your two week review in clinic.
- Start by washing your foot in a shower and avoid long immersions in a bath until the wound is dry and healed.
- Once the skin is healed over, you should gently massage the scar with some moisturising cream or bio-oil. This helps break down the scar tissue which is forming.

3. Continue to elevate the foot

- Once your wound has healed you only need to elevate your foot for comfort. You do not need to elevate as a routine.

4. Gently progress your activity

- If you are safe to bear weight on your foot you should start with a small amount of activity for a short time and slowly build up.
- You should listen to your foot and stop if it is starting to become sore.

5. Avoid heavy activity

- Fusions and osteotomy sites (where the bone is re-cut such as bunion surgery) will not be fully healed yet. You should continue to avoid any heavy lifting or impact activity (such as running).



6 weeks to 3 months after surgery

1. Clinic review

- Most patients will have a review at around 6 weeks after surgery. This is often the time where we can start to assess the healing of your bones by discussing your recovery, examining the foot and sometimes with X-ray examinations.
- By now considerable time has elapsed since surgery but often recovery is only beginning.

2. Increasing activity

- You should continue to increase your level of activity and return to normal shoes as you find comfortable
- You should continue to avoid lifting heavy objects and impact activity such as running or dancing.

3 months onwards

1. Care for your foot

- Over the year after surgery scars are particularly sensitive to light, you should ensure you apply suncream to the site and ideally cover the area during this time.

2. Swelling

- Swelling is common after all forms of foot and ankle surgery. This may persist for up to a year and a half after surgery

3. Get back to normal

- This is the time to start getting back to your usual activities.
- The final result of many surgeries on the foot and ankle takes over a year to achieve.
- It is important to start returning to your normal life as using your foot becomes easier.