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Ankle Fractures and Foot Fractures Rehabilitation Protocol

Bone healing requires immobilization. Bones take an average of 7 weeks to heal about 70% of normal strength. Once healing has started, the process can be stimulated through controlled, progressive strengthening. Common fractures and fusions may follow these guidelines.

Weight Bearing:

- Strict non-weight bearing for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Advance weight bearing over 4 weeks.

Brace Use:

- Weeks 1-6: complete immobilization in boot or cast.
- Weeks 7-10: in boot when out of bed.
- Weeks 11-12: boot for work/school. Brace for therapy and home.
- Week 13: brace until stable proprioception with eyes closed.
- Wear brace for all "at risk" activities for one year.

Physical Therapy:

- Begins after 6 weeks of immobilization.

Modalities:

- As needed to improve edema and pain control first two weeks in therapy. Cryotherapy after sessions.

Range of Motion:

- Active only first two weeks of therapy.
- Passive stretch thereafter if not progressing.
- Motion to include those, hind foot, and ankle.

Strength:

- Isometrics first week of therapy.
- Progress from closed chain to open chain as pain and motion permit.
- Goal: Global ankle strength 90% of opposite leg.

Proprioception:

- Progress as tolerated. Recommend brace for all proprioception training.
- Goal: One-legged balance with eyes closed for 20 seconds.

Home Exercise Program:

- Transition over to home exercise program when appropriate.

Note: Beware of increased swelling and pain which may indicate incompletely healed bone. Reduce weight bearing and therapy demands as indicated. Please call physician with any concerns. Patients with **Diabetes** **should be delayed 2-4 weeks** and should progress very slowly.

RETURN TO WORK PROTOCOL: ANKLE & FOOT FRACTURES

0-2 Weeks

- No work.

3-8 Weeks

- Seated work only.
- Must use crutches or knee roller at *all* times.
- Cast or cast boot on at *all* times.
- May need to elevate foot to control swelling.
- No driving.
- No limits on upper extremity work.

9-12 Weeks

- Must be in boot except while driving.
- Standing for 15 minutes per hour worked.
- Walking in boot for 15 minutes per hour.
- Stairs one time per hour.
- No squatting, kneeling, lifting or twisting.

13-16 Weeks

- Must wear ankle brace or lace-up boot to work.
- Standing/walking for 30 minutes per hour.
- Avoid ladders and uneven ground.

17 Weeks

- Return to regular duty.

****If you have specific work needs or are progressing at a faster rate, please request a functional evaluation from your physical therapist.**

Updated 10/2016