

Foot and Ankle Postoperative Instructions

We would like to provide you with some information that you may find helpful while planning for and recovering from your surgery with Dr. DeMill.

Medications

Typically, Dr. DeMill prescribes 5-8 medications after your surgery depending on your specific needs. Prescriptions will be sent into your pharmacy. The number and type of medications you receive will vary depending on your individual needs and or allergies. These prescriptions should provide you with enough medication until your first visit in the office after surgery. If you require additional medication before this appointment, please plan ahead. We can only handle medication requests during regular office hours.

Your medications may include:

- **A narcotic pain medication** such as Percocet (oxycodone), Norco (hydrocodone), Tylenol #3 (Codeine). Please remember that these medications seriously and adversely affect your judgment and response times, so drive responsibly. You should not consume alcoholic beverages while taking narcotic pain medication. Some of these narcotics also include Tylenol (acetaminophen). Remember that maximum daily amount of Tylenol (Acetaminophen) is 3,000 mg. Narcotic pain medications tend to cause constipation. The best remedy for this, should it occur, is to increase fluid intake, increase activity as tolerated and increase dietary fiber by eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grain cereals, breads and bran. A stool softener can be taken to help also.
- **A blood thinning medication** to prevent blood clots such as Aspirin, Xarelto, Eliquis or Coumadin. This medication and a compression sock on the non-surgical leg are used to help prevent blood clots. If you are already taking this type of medication please make Dr. DeMill aware of this.
- **An anti-inflammatory medication** called Celebrex. If you have any underlying heart related conditions or allergies to sulfa medications please make Dr. DeMill aware. You should not take any additional anti-inflammatory medication during this time. This includes prescriptions and over-the-counter medications such as Ibuprofen, Advil, Naprosyn, Aleve, etc.
- **A nerve medication** such as gabapentin to help control your postoperative nerve pain.
- **A heartburn medication** such as Pepcid to prevent heartburn with the other medications.
- **A stool softener** to help prevent constipation from the narcotics.
- **An anti-histamine medication** called Vistaril to help the pain medication work better, to help prevent itching from the narcotic and to calm anxiety. This medication can also help you rest better at night.
- **An anti-nausea medication** such as Zofran (ondansetron) in case the narcotics or anesthesia causes nausea.

Should any of these medications cause hives or shortness of breath, stop the medication, and notify us. Increasing your fluid intake will help flush the medication out of your system and get you quicker relief.

Pain and Swelling

Your foot/ankle may be numb and painless for as long as 24 hours after your surgery. This is due to the local anesthesia or nerve block used during your surgery. When this wears off you will start to experience normal postoperative pain. It is important that you not wait for the pain to become unbearable before taking your pain medication.

By doing so, it will greatly affect your ability to obtain timely pain relief. Use your pain medication as directed in the first week after surgery. You may experience swelling or a feeling of tightness and throbbing when your foot is resting on the ground. Elevating your leg above the level of your chest and the use of a basic ice bag behind your knee can help relieve this.

A cold therapy unit may be incorporated into your surgical dressing. This provides constant cold therapy directly into your surgical dressing. You should use these ice units 15-20 minutes on, 15-20 minutes off for the first 48-72 hours after surgery and then just as needed for as long as you're obtaining relief. If you don't have this type of unit, a basic ice bag placed over your dressing and behind your knee will help decrease your swelling and pain.

Warning Signs for a Blood Clot

If you experience constant cramping in your calf not relieved with elevation or your calf is hard, warm, or red contact our office. If you experience shortness of breath or sharp chest pain, go immediately to the nearest emergency room. In addition, you may be asked to wear a compression stocking on your non-operative leg until you begin the weight bearing process. This is to reduce the risk of a blood clot.

Surgical Dressing

Keep your dressing dry and intact until your first office appointment. If your dressing becomes wet, please contact Dr. DeMill's medical assistant for instructions. You may need to have it changed. You may notice some bloody drainage on your dressing. This is normal. The purpose of the dressing is to provide compression and absorb any drainage from the surgical incision. To help control bleeding apply light pressure and elevate the foot. Contact the office if the size of the bleeding on the dressings enlarges rapidly.

Activity

You should not put any weight on the operative foot/ankle until Dr. DeMill has given approval. If surgery was on your right foot/ankle or if you drive a standard vehicle, you should not drive until cleared by Dr. DeMill.

You should contact the office if you experience any of the following symptoms after your surgery:

- High fever (greater than 101 degrees) and chills.
- Uncontrollable bleeding.
- Inability to urinate for more than 8 hours.
- Calf cramping.
- Sudden color changes to your toes or if your toes turn white.
- Foul odor coming from your dressing.
- Severe onset of pain not controlled by pain medication.

Physical Therapy

After successful recovery from surgery, some patients will require physical therapy. Physical therapy involves three important but different elements; strength, flexibility and balance.

Strength is important to bring the limb to a state like the other limb. Because of the protracted nature of recovery, restoration of strength can be prolonged well after the completion of therapy. Regular frequent attention to home exercises is needed. Professional athletes return to sports as early as a few months because of their constant commitment to these strengthening programs. **Flexibility** is attained through stretching and motion. **Balance** is perhaps the most important element. Walking is a complex series of events we all take for granted. It requires coordination of multiple muscles and joints in an unconscious way. Balance is the conductor that orchestrates these complex motions. Without successful restoration of balance (or proprioception), the body is at higher risk of re-injury.



Incision and/or Scar

After surgery, your body heals with some amount of scar tissue. Everyone scars a little different. Scar tissue lacks the flexibility of the original tissues it replaces. Improving skin mobility after the incision has healed is very important for healthy healing. The progress of this recovery is easily monitored by looking at the skin incision. When directed by Dr. DeMill, you may begin scar massage to help aid in this recovery. Once the incision heals completely (2-3 weeks), lotions or oils can be used to minimize scarring and help with tissue mobility. As the incision(s) begins to soften and disappear, the skin and surrounding tissue will experience less discomfort and have better appearance.

Questions or Concerns

For non-emergent questions or concerns such as prescription refills, general questions or to discuss postoperative concerns the best way to reach us is by emailing my Medical Assistant at ma.demill@mountainortho.com. We will get back to you as soon as possible during regular office hours Monday-Friday. If you have questions outside of regular office hours that need immediate attention, you can reach the answering service at 801-295-7200. If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call **911** or go to the nearest emergency room.

Disability Forms

Should you have any disability forms or work excuse needs, please get them in to us as soon as possible. **We require 10-14 business days for completion** and the earlier you get them to us the quicker we can turn them back around to you. Please be aware, there may be a charge for completion of disability forms.

Equipment

We have provided a list of items that will aid in your recovery. Some you will need, while others may make some tasks more convenient. You may find these products at **online or through our local medical supply stores**.

- **Cast/dressing protector** - During your immediate postoperative period and when in a cast, you cannot get this extremity wet. We have products available that will help protect your surgical dressing and cast while making showering more convenient.
- **Ambulation aids - Crutches, Walker, Turning Leg Caddy, Wheelchair** - Immediate after surgery you will need some type of device to assist with ambulation. Which device is best for you depends upon your individual needs and overall physical strength. We recommend obtaining these prior to surgery so that you may have some time to practice.
- **Shower bench** - This can greatly assist in bathing by allowing you to sit in the shower on a stable surface and use a hand-held shower. This would help decrease the risk of a fall.
- **Compression Stockings** - These will be worn on your non-operative leg. This is for prevention of bloodclots.
- **Cold Therapy Unit** - This is an ice machine that can be incorporated into your surgical dressing to help with pain and swelling. These devices help keep the surgical site more cool than regular ice bags.

Shoe wear & Orthotics

As you progress through the recovery process after surgery, Dr. DeMill will assess your foot and ankle and provide recommendations for shoe wear and orthotics based on your foot type and the type of procedure you have had.

