



MedStar Union
Memorial Hospital

Knowledge and Compassion
Focused on You

A Therapy Guide to Foot & Ankle Surgery and Recovery



Welcome

We are glad that you have chosen MedStar Union Memorial Hospital for your foot and ankle surgery. Our goal is to make this experience as pleasant as possible for you. If you have any questions about your hospital stay, rehabilitation or recovery period, please contact your physician for more information specific to your surgery.

This guide is to help you:

1. Understand what to expect during your surgery and recovery
2. Prepare your house for a safe return home after your surgery
3. Know what to bring to the hospital on the day of surgery
4. Understand what to expect on the day of surgery and if you stay in the hospital overnight
5. Understand the role of your rehabilitation team
6. Learn exercises to do at home before and after surgery
7. Review ways to move around safely after your surgery to protect yourself

What to Expect During Your Surgery and Recovery

To help protect the surgery you are having done, your doctor will want you to keep the operated foot off the ground at all times. This is called **non-weight bearing** and means you cannot put any weight at all on the operated foot, until your doctor says that it is safe to do so. You generally return to the doctor for a follow-up visit about one week after surgery.



After the surgery, your foot will be wrapped up in a large, bulky splint to protect the foot and ankle. The doctor initially uses these splints instead of a cast, because the foot will swell after surgery. These splints may feel very heavy because you have just had surgery. When you return to the doctor, they will remove the splint and replace it with a smaller, lighter cast or boot.

Your doctor will want you to rest as much as possible right after surgery. Your foot will swell, and may become painful, when it is left hanging down. So, when you are sitting or lying down, keep the leg elevated to help keep the swelling down and reduce pain.



Prepare Your Home

To plan ahead for you returning home after surgery, check your house to see how you can make it safe and comfortable while you are recuperating. Here is a list of things to look for and consider **BEFORE** you come into the hospital:



Entrance

- How will you get into/out of your house after surgery?
- Do you have to climb steps? How many?
- Do your steps have railings?
- Is there an easier way in *without steps* that you can use?

Hint: Have a plan to get into your house the easiest way—and practice that entry method *before* your surgery.

Driving

- You will **NOT** be able to drive immediately after your surgery.
- At your follow-up visit with your doctor about one week after surgery, you will learn when you are allowed to drive again.

Factors that affect driving after foot and ankle surgery:

- Use of pain medication
- Which foot is operated on
- How driving motions of the foot may impact the surgical site

Medications

- Your doctor will prescribe pain medicine to help keep you comfortable while you are recuperating after surgery. You will leave the hospital with a prescription for this medicine.
- Pain medications cannot be called into a pharmacy by the doctor, so you will need someone to take the prescription to a pharmacy to get it filled for you.
- For your convenience, MedStar Union Memorial Hospital has an outpatient pharmacy available from Monday-Friday 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday 7 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- The MUMH outpatient pharmacy also offers bedside delivery of medications.

Hint: Before surgery, find a pharmacy near your home (24 hour pharmacies with weekend hours are very convenient) where you can bring a prescription to have your pain medicine filled—in case you go home on Saturday afternoon or Sunday when the MUMH pharmacy is closed.

Prepare Your Home (Continued)

Bedroom

- Where will you sleep at home after surgery?
- Do you have to climb stairs to get to the bedroom?
- Can you get a walker, crutches or a wheelchair through the bedroom door and to the bed?
- Can you sleep on the first floor to avoid climbing steps?

Bathroom

- Is your bathroom accessible?
- Can you get a walker, crutches or a wheelchair through the door?
- Do you have to climb stairs to get to the bathroom?
- How will you bathe?

Bathing

- **NO shower or tub bath until your follow-up visit with your doctor**
- You will **not** be able to get your foot wet while you have a cast or splint.
- Once the doctor says it is OK for you to shower, you will need to cover the cast with a plastic bag to keep it dry in the shower.

Hint: A **shower chair** or a **tub bench** allows you to sit down and shower safely after surgery.

Kitchen

- Keep a supply of easy to cook meals on hand.
- Frozen dinners are quick and require minimal preparation.
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach on countertops and in the refrigerator.
- If possible, plan to have someone assist you with grocery shopping.

Laundry

- Is your laundry room accessible?
- Are the washer and dryer difficult to reach?
- Consider asking a family member or friend to assist you with your laundry.

Rugs

- Throw rugs or scatter rugs are very dangerous because they have potential to trip you.

Hint: **Remove all throw rugs or scatter rugs** before you come in for surgery.

Pets

- It can be dangerous for people who use equipment (walker, crutches or wheelchair) to walk and move around with pets under foot.
- Taking care of a pet (walking a dog, cleaning a kitty litter box, etc) can be very difficult when you are not able to stand on your operated leg after surgery.

Hint: You might consider **having pets stay with a family member or friend** while you are recovering.

Prepare Your Home (Continued)



If you are planning on using a wheelchair at home, please consider:

- Doorways must be at least 28” wide across for a standard wheelchair to fit.
- Wheelchairs may be lifted up **ONE** step or curb with the patient in them –your therapist can show you how this is done safely.

***Hint:* More than one step is very difficult to climb safely in a wheelchair and is not recommended.**

- Bathrooms must be at least 28” wide for a wheelchair to fit

***Hint:* If the bathroom is not wide enough, you will need a bedside commode for toileting (see Durable Medical Equipment on page 3).**

- Carpet makes it harder to push a wheelchair.

***Hint:* Remove all throw rugs for safety!**

- In the kitchen, make sure you can reach commonly used items from wheelchair height.

***Hint:* You may need to re-arrange some items for easier access.**

General Home Safety Tips

1. Wear footwear that gives you good support and traction. Tennis shoes/sneakers with good tread on the bottom are great options.
2. Install non-skid mats on the shower or tub floor.
3. A hand-held shower can make showering much easier after surgery.
4. Make sure feet are dry before getting out of tub, so you don't slip.
5. Sit on a sturdy chair while brushing teeth, shaving, applying makeup, cooking, etc.
6. **Do not sit on chairs that have wheels.**
7. Sit in firm chairs with armrests. They are much easier to get up from.
8. If you are using a walker, do NOT hold things in your hand as you use your walker. Walker bags are available for purchase on-line or at local pharmacies.

Durable Medical Equipment:
You may require assistance with special equipment at home for some time after surgery. Your therapy team will recommend specific items, and your case manager will assist you with getting the equipment you need. This equipment is not paid for by insurance, so you are encouraged to explore other options when buying equipment. Below is equipment commonly used after orthopedic surgery, as well as stores and websites where they can be purchased in preparation for your surgery.

RAISED TOILET SEAT (\$20-30)		SHOWER BENCH (\$30-60)	
RAISED TOILET SEAT WITH ARMS (\$50-60)		EXTENDED TUB BENCH (\$80-100)	
		BEDSIDE COMMODE (\$80 AND UP)	
		SAFETY/GRAB BARS (\$15 AND UP)	

Where to purchase equipment:

- Amazon.com • CVS • Drugstore.com • ebay • Healthsuperstore.com • Home Depot • Lowe's
- Northern Pharmacy • Target • Walgreens • Wal-Mart

What to Bring to the Hospital

- **Driver's license** or passport for identification
- **Insurance cards including Prescription card**
- Copies of advance directives or living will (if you have them)
- **Medication list**
Write down a list of all the medicines you take, dosages and the time of day you take them, including over-the-counter drugs and prescription medicines.

DO NOT BRING ANY MEDICATIONS FROM HOME!

- **Clothes:** pajamas, underwear, socks, shirts
You will have a big, bulky dressing on your leg so loose-fitting clothing is recommended for your lower body, such as sweat pants or shorts.
- **Footwear:** rubber-soled shoes with good traction (such as tennis shoes)
Please do not wear backless shoes for safety.
- **Toiletries:** soap, shampoo, shaving items, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, make-up, brush, deodorant
- **Personal equipment:** glasses, hearing aids, dentures
- **Assistive devices:** crutches, walker, or wheelchair
If you have your own equipment, please bring it with you and label it with your name. If you do not have any equipment, necessary items will be provided for you at the hospital through your insurance.
- **C-PAP** or external breathing devices
If you typically use assistive breathing devices at home, please bring them with you and label them with your name. Your nursing team will discuss arrangements for using them while in the hospital.
- **Family member or caregiver**
Your caregiver participates in family training with the team and takes you home when you are discharged from the hospital.

Day of Surgery

You will receive information from MedStar Union Memorial Hospital and your doctor's office that provides specific instructions regarding admission procedures.

On the day of your surgery, please arrive at the hospital at least two hours prior to your scheduled surgery. Park in Garage A and walk over the breezeway. Be sure to sign in as a visitor at the entrance and proceed to the Admitting Department (Main Floor of the Johnston Professional Building) to register.

After you register, you will proceed to the preoperative area, where the experienced staff of nurses will assist you. You will also meet with your doctor and the anesthesiologist at that time.

Next, you will move into the operating room, where the nurses will prepare you for surgery and the doctor operates.

After surgery, you will be taken to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit where you will stay until you wake up after surgery. This is also known as the recovery room.

From the Recovery Room, you may be transferred to the orthopaedic unit on the 7th floor of the hospital, or you may be discharged to home with your caregiver/family.

If You Stay in the Hospital Overnight

Before you are discharged from the hospital, our goal is to make sure you are safe to return home. The day after surgery, a physical therapist (PT) will come to see you in your room. The PT will inquire about your home situation and any equipment that you have or may need. The therapist will also assess and train you in the skills you need in order to go home safely. These skills include moving around in bed, transferring from the bed and chair, moving from sitting to standing and walking with the appropriate assistive device—all while not putting any weight on the foot/ankle that had surgery. If you have difficulty with your activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing or moving safely around the bathroom, you may also see an occupational therapist (OT).

In addition to your safety, our goal is to help you manage your pain. Your nurse will assist you with pain medication. Keeping the foot elevated when you are in bed or sitting in a chair and using ice on the foot/ankle can also help to reduce pain.

Going Home from the Hospital

You must arrange for someone to drive you home after surgery. This is best completed *before* surgery. You will **NOT** be able to drive home and you may not drive until cleared to do so by your surgeon.

Getting In and Out Of the Car

Front Seat Car Transfer:

1. Prior to car entry, make sure the seat is back completely from the dashboard and the back of the seat is reclined. This enables you more leg room to swing the operative leg into the car.
2. Turn around so you are facing away from the car and back up to the car with your walker/crutches.
3. When you feel the back of your legs touch the seat, reach one hand back for the seat and bend at your waist to lower yourself down. **Keep your operative leg off of the ground!**
4. Swing your operative leg in gently.



Home Exercise Program

It is important to continue an exercise regimen after discharge to help improve your overall physical conditioning after surgery. This includes general exercises that help build muscle tone and flexibility, without putting strain on the affected joint. These will be taught while you are in the hospital. If you are an outpatient, consult with physician before beginning these exercises. As an inpatient, you will be taught these exercises by the therapy staff.

Exercise 1-Ankle pumps

LEG / KNEE / ANKLE - 4 ANKLE: Pump – Supine



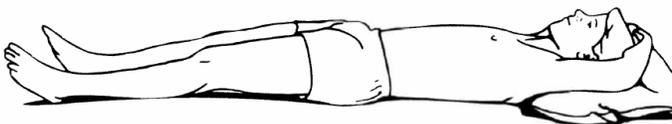
On uninvolved foot, point toes toward floor then toward nose.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 times per day.

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Exercise 2-Gluteal Squeezes

TRUNK STABILITY - 24
Isometric Gluteals



Tighten buttock muscles. Hold 5 seconds.

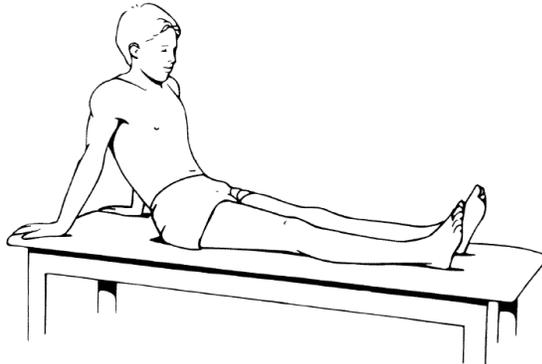
Repeat 10 times per session. Do 2 sessions per day.

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Home Exercise Program (Continued)

Exercise 3-Quad Sets

HIP / KNEE - 11
Strengthening: Quadriceps Sets



Tighten muscles on top of thigh by pushing knees down into surface. Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 sessions per day.

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Exercise 4-Heel Slides

LEG / KNEE / ANKLE - 3 KNEE: Heel Slide – Supine



Beginning with toes pointed toward ceiling and knees straight, slide involved heel toward buttocks while bending knee.

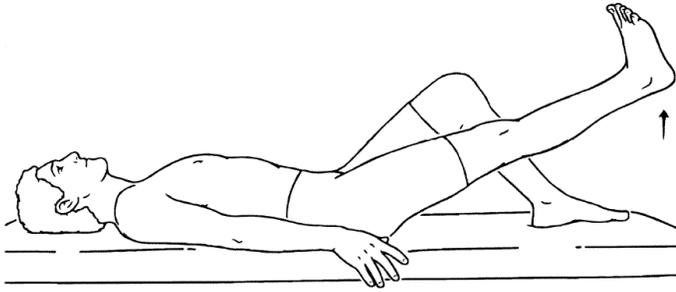
Repeat 10 times. Do 2 times per day.

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Home Exercise Program (Continued)

Exercise 5-Straight Leg Raises

HIP / KNEE - 17 Strengthening: Straight Leg Raise
(Phase 1)



On operated leg, tighten muscles on front of thigh, then lift leg 12 inches from surface, keeping knee locked.

Repeat 10 times per set. Do 2 sets per session.

Do 2 sessions per day.

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Safe Mobility after Surgery

THIS INFORMATION IS FOR REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY!

****Please DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME until you have been properly trained by our MedStar Union Memorial Hospital therapy staff.****

Chair Transfers Using a Walker

To stand up:

1. Scoot forward in the chair until you are sitting on the edge.
2. Lean forward and push down through the armrests, using your non-operative leg to stand up.
3. Keep your operated foot off the floor.
4. Once standing, reach for the walker first with one hand, then the other.
5. Get your balance.

**** Remember: It is easiest to get up from a firm, sturdy chair with armrests.**



Chair Transfers Using a Walker

To sit down:

1. Back up until you feel the back of your leg touching the chair.
2. Move your operated foot out in front of you, keeping the foot off the ground.
3. Reach back for the arm of the chair first with one hand, then the other.
4. Lower yourself slowly into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the ground.



Walking with a Walker

1. Advance walker forward so back legs of the walker are even with the toes of the non-operative leg.
2. Slightly lean forward and push down through hands on walker handles so most of your body weight is through your arms. Your elbows should be slightly bent.
3. Move your good foot forward until foot is in the middle of the walker, while supporting your body weight on the walker.

**** Remember: Your operated foot should never touch the floor. Do not use it for balance.**



Stepping Down Off of Curb with a Walker:

1. Bring non-operative foot to the edge of the curb.
2. Place walker down on the ground below the curb.
3. Hold onto the walker and push your weight down through your hands.
4. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lower your non-operative leg down onto the ground.



Climbing Up a Curb using a Walker

1. **Back up** to the curb until the walker legs hit the curb wall.
2. Push your weight down through your hands.
3. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lift your good leg on the curb. You will need to get your non-operative foot back as far as possible to allow room for the walker on the curb.
4. Bring walker up onto the curb.



Climbing Up a Curb using a Walker and a Chair

1. Back up to the curb until the walker legs hit the curb wall.
2. Reach back for the chair with first one hand then the other.
3. Lower yourself slowly into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the ground.
4. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lift your good leg on the curb.
5. Pivot your body around in the chair so you have room to stand up with the walker.
6. Bring walker up onto the curb.



Chair Transfers with Crutches

To stand up:

1. Place both crutches in one hand and hold hand grips. Place the other hand on the arm of the chair.
2. Scoot forward to the edge of the chair.
3. Lean forward and push up with both hands and your good leg, keeping your operated leg off the floor.
4. Get your balance.
5. Place crutches under arms, one at a time.

Reminder: Be sure to keep your operated foot off of the floor!



Chair Transfers with Crutches

To Sit Down:

1. Approach the chair.
2. Turn around using small steps and back up to the chair, until you feel the chair against the back of your good leg.
3. Place both crutches in one hand.
4. Reach the other hand back for the arm of the chair.
5. Bend forward at the waist and sit down slowly, keeping the operated leg up off the floor.



Walking with Crutches

1. While balancing on your good leg, move both crutches at the same time.
2. Crutches should be about shoulder width apart and even on the floor.
3. Push down through hands.
4. Step forward with the strong leg, keeping the operated leg off the floor.



Climbing Up Stairs with Crutches

1. Bring good foot close to the bottom step.
2. Bend knee to bring operated foot behind you.
3. Push your weight down through your hands onto the crutches.
4. Step up onto the stair with your good foot.
5. Bring crutches up onto the step.
6. Keep operated foot up off the floor.



Stepping Down Stairs with Crutches

1. Bring good foot to the edge of the steps.
2. Straighten your knee to bring your operated leg forward, but do not put it down on the step.
3. Balancing on your good leg, slowly bring the crutches down onto the next step by bending your good knee.
4. Push down through your hands onto the crutches.
5. Lower your good leg down to the next step.
6. Continue down the steps.



Bumping Up Stairs on Your Bottom

Setup: Place a step-stool at the top of the stairs, and a chair just behind the stool

1. Back up to the stairs until your good foot hits the stair.
2. Reach back for the stairs and sit on the step that is at a comfortable height for you (typically the second step from the bottom).
3. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you and off the ground, reach both hands back for the next higher step.
4. Lift (bump) yourself up onto the next step using your arms and your good leg. Continue this way until you reach the top of the stairs.
5. Lift yourself up from the top step onto the step stool.
6. Then, lift yourself up from the stool onto the chair. Swing your legs around to sit fully on the chair and then stand up with your assistive device.



Chair Transfers with a Knee Walker

To Stand Up:

1. Scoot forward in the chair until you are sitting on the edge.
2. Lean forward and push down through the armrests and use your non-operative leg to stand up.
3. Keep your operated foot off the floor.
4. Once standing, reach for the knee walker with one hand. Continue holding onto the chair.
5. Pivot your body around and place the knee of your operated leg on the pads.
5. Get your balance and adjust your positioning of your operated leg until you are comfortable.



To Sit Down:

1. Approach the chair until you are right in front of it.
2. Reach out with one hand and take hold of one arm of the chair.
3. Keeping your operated foot off the floor, pivot your body around so your bottom faces the chair.
4. Bring other hand back to the other arm of the chair.
5. Gently lower yourself down into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the floor.



Online Resources

These are just some of the many online resource options available to make your recovery at home after surgery as easy and comfortable as possible.

Transportation

Go to www.mva.maryland.gov for information on temporary parking placards for individuals with a disability (form number VR-210)

Check out www.MedStarHealth.org/Uber for information about cost estimates when using the [Uber](#) app on your Smartphone

Food Delivery

Meals on Wheels of Central Maryland (www.mealsonwheelsmd.org)

Peapod (www.peapod.com)

Amazon PrimeNow (primenow.amazon.com/)

Jet.com (www.jet.com)

Home Health Aides / Private Duty Nursing

MedStar Visiting Nurses Association (www.medstarvna.org/)

The Lisa Vogel Agency (www.lisavogelagency.com)

Elizabeth Cooney Agency (elizabethcooneyagency.com/)

Visiting Angels (www.visitingangels.com/)

Home Helpers (www.homehelpershomecare.com/)

Notes

Knowledge and Compassion **Focused on You**

