

Steven J. Lee, MD  
NY Orthopedics  
159 East 74<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10021  
Tel (212)- 737-3301

## **Post-Operative Instructions: Ankle Surgery**

### **Pain Medication:**

Most of our patients are prescribed a short supply of an opioid narcotic pain medication to help ease their pain post-surgery. This medication, if prescribed, has been sent to your preferred pharmacy. The pain is usually the worst the first few days, and usually by the 3rd day, the pain eases up significantly. It is very important that you only take the opioid pain medication prescribed to you as directed, and only if needed. Besides addiction, one of the side effects of opioid narcotic medications is constipation. We recommend that you take a stool softener when taking this medication. Should you not need to take the opioid pain medication, our recommended medication for pain relief is Tylenol. It is recommended that you consult with your Primary Care Physician prior to taking any medications to ensure the medications are safe for you to take.

### **Elevation and Ice:**

It is EXTREMELY important to keep your ankle/foot elevated above the level of your heart as much as possible to help reduce pain and swelling. You can furthermore ice the ankle area over top of your surgical dressing for up to 20 minutes at a time, multiple times per day. Let your ankle area warm up before reapplication. Keep your dressing dry.

### **Aspirin:**

Aspirin is a blood thinning medication that is often used as prophylaxis against DVT (i.e. blood clot) formation. You should only take Aspirin after first speaking with and receiving clearance from your Primary Care Physician. Should your Primary Care Physician say it is safe for you to take Aspirin after your surgery, we recommend that you take Aspirin 81mg per day for 7 days beginning the first day after surgery. Should your Primary Care Physician recommend against you taking Aspirin, then you should not take Aspirin.

### **Surgical Dressing and Showering**

Your post-operative splint and dressing must stay on at ALL times and should be kept clean and especially DRY. Minimize any sweating, including exercising or being outside in hot/humid weather. Sweating increases infection risk.

For showering, you should cover it with a waterproof bag when bathing to keep it dry. Secure the waterproof bag well to avoid leakage. Use CAUTION when showering so as not to slip and fall.

**Weightbearing and Crutches:**

Whether you are allowed to bear weight depends on your specific treatment. Discuss with Dr. Lee about whether weightbearing is allowed.

**Nausea:**

It is common to get nausea after surgery usually from the result of your anesthesia. Start with drinking fluids such as Ginger Ale, then if tolerated, progress with a light soup and simple foods such as bread. Then if tolerated, you can resume a normal diet. Prolonged use of narcotic medications can also increase nausea symptoms.

**Nerve Block:**

You may have received a nerve block with your surgery. If so, your leg may stay numb for up to 24 hours. Increased sensation (usually accompanied by pins/needles sensation) and movement of your affected extremity are signs that the block is wearing off. You may also experience pain and discomfort of the extremity as the nerve block wears off.

**First Post-Operative Appointment:**

Your first post-operative appointment should be scheduled for 7-10 days after your surgery. Call our office to schedule your appointment if you haven't already done so.

**Physical Therapy:**

We will further discuss the details and scheduling of your Physical Therapy with you at your first post-operative appointment. We have a list of recommended Physical Therapists that will be provided to you at that time.

**Driving:**

Driving is something that is based purely on your ability to safely drive your car. In general, it is better to be safe than sorry, and only drive when you think you can be in complete control of your vehicle. You should furthermore never drive while taking the pain medication prescribed to you.

**Common Concerns:**

- Bruising and/or swelling of the affected limb will continue to develop and may change colors (blue to green to yellow) as time goes on. Gravity can pull the bruising and swelling downward into the toes. Elevation and icing is the best way to alleviate this bruising and swelling.
- Numbness or tingling of the affected limb after surgery is common. This can be secondary to the effects of the nerve block and irritation of nerves due to swelling.
- A sudden rush or feeling of fullness with pain when the affected limb is in a dependent position is common.

**Speaking to Dr. Lee after surgery:**

Dr. Lee or someone from his team will reach out to you by phone after surgery. Please call 212-737-3301 and request to have Dr. Lee paged if you do not hear from Dr. Lee by 9:00 PM or miss his call.

**Patient Portal:**

A great option for contacting our team is through the NY Orthopedics Patient Portal. If you haven't already registered, you may do so by heading to <https://www.newyorkorthopedics.com> and clicking on "Patient Portal Log In" in the upper right hand corner of the screen. You should then click the link "Sign up today" and follow the instructions to create your account.

**Call the office IMMEDIATELY for:**

- Fever (>101.5°F) or chills
- Oozing or redness of the wound
- Severe, unbearable pain, that is not reduced with pain medication

**Report to the nearest Emergency Room Immediately for:**

- Difficulty breathing or heaviness/pain in the chest
- Symptoms of an allergic reaction such as a rash, swelling in places not operated on.

**\*REMEMBER - these are only guidelines for what to expect following surgery. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call the office or send a message through the Patient Portal.**