DR. KAISEN YAO, MD

ORTHOPEDIC SPORTS MEDICINE SURGEON

Post-Operative Instructions

# Ankle Fracture Fixation

Northwell Health • Department of Orthopedic Surgery & Sports Medicine • Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD

What to expect and how to care for yourself during the first weeks of recovery.

| Patient Name | Date of Surgery | Prescribing Surgeon |
|---|---|---|
| | | Dr. Kaisen Yao, MD |

## Activity and Weight-Bearing

**Weight-Bearing Status**

- ☐ Weight Bearing as Tolerated
- ☐ 50% Partial Weight Bearing
- ☐ Flat Foot Weight Bearing
- ☐ Non Weight Bearing

- Keep your splint on until Dr. Yao removes it at your first office visit.
- Do not put weight through the operative leg until your surgeon confirms the fracture is healing and clears you to progress.
- Avoid ankle range-of-motion exercises until specifically instructed by your surgeon or therapist.
- Begin physical therapy when directed by your surgeon.
- Perform home exercises as shown on the last page.

## Wound and Dressing Care

- Leave the splint and all bandages in place until your first office visit. Do not remove or change them yourself.
- Keep the splint and dressings clean and dry at all times.
- Do not remove the splint to inspect the incision or apply creams, ointments, or other products under it.
- Call the office if the splint gets wet, becomes damaged, feels too tight, or if drainage soaks through the dressings.

## Pain Management

Some pain, swelling, and stiffness after surgery is normal and expected - the goal of our pain protocol is to keep you comfortable, not pain-free. Your specific prescriptions will be reviewed with you at discharge. Your standard medication plan is:

- **Celecoxib 200 mg** - take by mouth twice daily for 30 days.
- **Oxycodone (Roxicodone) 5 mg** - take by mouth as needed for pain, up to 4 times a day, for the first 5 days after surgery.
- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 500 mg** - take by mouth as needed for pain, every 6 hours.
- **Aspirin (chewable) 81 mg** - take by mouth twice a day for 30 days to help prevent blood clots.
- **Senokot-S (sennosides-docusate)** - take 1 tablet by mouth daily, starting the day of surgery, for 14 days, to help prevent constipation from the pain medication.

If you received a nerve block, remember it will wear off over the following 8-24 hours. Start your pain medication on schedule rather than waiting for the block to wear off, since pain is easier to prevent than to catch up on. Taking medication with food can reduce nausea.

For pain and swelling, use a sealed cold pack over the outside of the splint for 20 minutes at a time. Keep the splint and dressings completely dry. Do not remove or loosen the splint to apply ice. Do not put ice or a cold therapy pad inside the splint.

Do not drive, operate machinery, or drink alcohol while taking narcotic pain medication. If prescribed antibiotics, complete the full course.

## Bathing and Showering

- Keep the splint on and completely dry at all times, including when bathing.
- Sponge bathe until your first office visit. Do not let water run over the splint or dressings.
- Do not soak the splint or leg in a tub, pool, or hot tub.
- Dr. Yao will give you updated showering and wound-care instructions at your office visit.

## Swelling, Elevation, and Ice

- Swelling is common after orthopedic surgery. Elevate the affected extremity when possible.
- Apply a sealed ice pack over the outside of the splint for 20 minutes at a time. Keep the splint dry; do not remove it or put ice inside it.
- Bruising around the ankle and foot is common after surgery. This will resolve on its own within a few weeks.

## Diet and Hydration

- Resume your regular diet as tolerated unless otherwise instructed.
- Protein and carbohydrates are critical to post-surgical recovery. Make sure you are eating clean sources of nutrients and supplementing if needed.
- Start with light meals if you have nausea.
- Drink plenty of fluids unless you were told to limit fluid intake.
- Smoking, vaping, or tobacco use are strictly prohibited after surgery, and can cause major complications with wound healing and recovery if used.

**Call the Office Immediately If You Have:**

- Fever greater than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Increasing redness, warmth, swelling, or drainage from the incision
- Severe pain not controlled by prescribed medication
- Numbness, tingling, or worsening weakness
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Calf pain, significant swelling in the leg, chest pain, or shortness of breath

**For a true emergency — chest pain, severe shortness of breath, uncontrolled bleeding, or any other urgent medical concern — call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room immediately.**

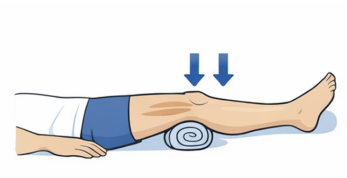
## Follow-Up Appointment

Please call the office at **718-208-1440** to schedule a follow-up appointment between 8–14 days after surgery.

## Home Exercises

These gentle exercises protect your healing ankle while keeping the rest of your leg moving. Repeat each 10 times, 3–4 sessions per day. Do not attempt ankle range-of-motion exercises until your surgeon or physical therapist specifically clears you to begin them.

Toe Curls & Wiggles: Gently curl and wiggle your toes throughout the day to encourage circulation. Keep your ankle still and protected in the splint. Leave the splint in place until your office visit.



**Quad Sets:** Lie on your back with your leg straight. Tighten the muscle at the front of your thigh and hold for 3–5 seconds, then relax. This can typically be done even while your ankle is protected.

**Hip and Knee Range of Motion:** Gently bend and straighten your hip and knee throughout the day, with your ankle still protected, to maintain mobility and circulation in the leg.