

Discharge Instructions: Foot and Ankle Surgery

Swelling

Swelling is expected, but controlling it helps reduce pain and improve healing.

- **Elevate your foot and ankle above your heart** as much as possible, especially during the first 5–7 days.
- **Avoid prolonged periods of sitting with your foot down**, especially in the first week.
- Use pillows to support your leg when lying down.

Dressing & Splint Care

- **Do not remove your dressing or splint** unless instructed by your surgeon.
- **Keep everything clean and dry.**
- Cover your splint with a **plastic waterproof bag** if you must be near water (e.g., while bathing).
- **Do not stick anything inside the splint** to scratch or adjust the padding.

Tip: If your toes are visible, monitor them for color and temperature. They should remain **warm and pink**, not pale or blue.

Bearing Weight

- **Do not place any weight** on your operated foot or ankle until cleared by your surgeon.
- Use your crutches, walker, or knee scooter **at all times** when upright.
- Keep weight off the leg even when transferring or standing.

Bathing / Showering

- **No soaking, tub bathing, or swimming** until cleared.
- Use sponge baths or shower with a **waterproof cast/splint cover** to protect your dressing.

Driving

Do not drive if:

- Your operated leg is involved (especially right foot or ankle)
- You are using a splint, cast, or scooter
- You are taking narcotic pain medication

Most patients are cleared to drive when they are **pain-free, off narcotics, and able to safely brake and control the vehicle**.

Medications

You may be prescribed a narcotic pain reliever.

- Take it **only as needed**, and follow dosing instructions carefully.
- **Drink plenty of fluids and eat a high-fiber diet** to avoid constipation.
- **Avoid alcohol and do not drive** while taking narcotic medications.

You may also be instructed to:

- Take **aspirin** or another blood thinner to prevent blood clots (confirm with your surgeon).
- Use **stool softeners** if needed for constipation.

Activity and Exercise

- **Rest is essential** for the first few days after surgery.
- Gently **move your toes** several times a day to promote circulation.

- At least 3–4 times per day, let your foot hang for a few minutes and **move your toes like you're making a fist**, then straighten them fully.

Avoid any active ankle or foot motion unless instructed by your provider or physical therapist.

Wound Monitoring

Watch for signs of complications:

- Fever **over 101.5°F**
- Chills
- Persistent or increasing pain
- Redness, warmth, or drainage from the incision
- Significant swelling or tightness in the foot
- Numbness or tingling that doesn't improve

Emergency Warning Signs

Seek immediate care if you have:

- **Chest pain**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Calf pain or swelling** in the non-operative leg

These could be signs of a **blood clot or pulmonary embolism**, which require urgent treatment.

Follow-Up Appointment

You should have a follow-up visit scheduled with **Dr. Grutter 10–14 days** after your surgery.

If it hasn't been scheduled, **call the office when you get home** to arrange it.