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# Frequently Asked Questions about Foot and Ankle Surgery

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A patient's guide

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## **Will I need a General Anaesthetic?**

In many cases you will need to have a general anaesthetic for your operation. Some operations are undertaken with a 'pain block' in the foot and sedation given into a vein. In other cases the surgery will be undertaken under local anaesthetic. The nature of the anaesthesia will be discussed with you before the surgery, by both the surgical team and the anaesthetist.

If you wish to access more information on anaesthesia, you can access the Safe Anaesthesia website through the links on my website - [www.fredthefoot.co.uk](http://www.fredthefoot.co.uk). The Safe Anaesthesia website has been written by Dr Klinck and Dr Navapurkar, who are both Consultant Anaesthetists, and work regularly with me.

## **Will I need to stay overnight?**

You will be informed prior to your admission as to the length of your hospital stay. Instructions for your time of admission, and instructions for your preparation for surgery will also

be sent to you. The duration of your stay will depend on the type of surgery and how far you live from the hospital. If you have not received a letter with these details a few days before surgery, please phone the office on 01223 518989.

## **How soon can I walk after my operation?**

This depends on the type of surgery you are having. A physiotherapist will help and advise you either on the day of surgery or on the morning following surgery. You will be provided with post-operative footwear and walking aids such as crutches, if this is thought necessary. The physiotherapist will then teach you how to use these. There is an information sheet on non-weightbearing, which is available on my website, and it maybe helpful to read this.

## **Will I have pain after my surgery?**

You will have some discomfort after surgery, but the surgery should not be painful. You will be offered pain relief.



Your anaesthetist will talk to you prior to surgery to decide what pain relief you will need.

Take your painkillers regularly and as prescribed, as this will better control your pain.

#### **When will my stitches come out?**

Not all wounds have stitches that need to be removed, some have steristrips (butterflies) and others have dissolvable stitches. Your wound will be checked when you come back for your first follow up appointment. This is usually two weeks after surgery.

Wounds are usually left undisturbed for two weeks, as the dressings have been applied in a sterile, operating theatre environment. It is therefore better to leave the wounds alone. You should seek advice if the pain increases, you develop a temperature or the dressings become smelly or offensive.

#### **When can I go back to work?**

This depends on the type of surgery you have had and the type of work you do. When you do go back to work you may have to consider wearing open-toed sandals, or oversized shoes, as your foot may be swollen for some months. Please feel free to ask for more specific advice, if you require it.

#### **Will I be able to get upstairs easily?**

If you are able to weightbear on your operated leg you will be able to ascend stairs as normal. Before leaving hospital the physiotherapist will ensure you are safe to do this. If you are non-weight bearing, going upstairs is difficult. Even if you think you can go up stairs on your knees or bottom when you get to the top you still need to push up into a standing position on your good leg. This can be difficult and is not always safe. If a bed can be brought downstairs this may be a safer option.

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## When can I drive?

This again depends on the type of surgery you are having. Having an automatic car allows you to drive earlier, if the surgery is to your left foot. Some people drive an automatic car left footed after right foot surgery. When your Consultant says you can drive you should always let your car insurance company know that you have had surgery and that your surgeon has given you permission to drive. The final responsibility that you can control the car is yours.

## How soon can I fly after my surgery?

You should not travel long haul after major foot surgery for at least three months. This includes operations such as ankle fusions or tendon reconstructions. You should not fly if you have your foot/leg in a plaster. For operations such as bunions you should avoid flying for approximately one month after surgery. This reduces the risk of deep vein thrombosis (blood clots).

## When can I wash my foot?

You will usually return to clinic two weeks following surgery for the dressings and stitches to be removed. For some patients you may be able to shower after this but you will be given individual advice at this time. It is possible to purchase a special cover that goes over a plaster or dressing that allows you to shower safely without getting the wound or plaster wet. Please ask for the leaflet on this item or go to [www.limboproducts.co.uk](http://www.limboproducts.co.uk) or [www.protectacast.com](http://www.protectacast.com)

## What shoes should I wear following surgery?

Immediately after surgery you will be provided with a surgical shoe, which protects your dressing and will also dictate how you walk, to protect your foot. This shoe should be worn day and night. When you are allowed to come out of your surgical shoe the best shoe wear is an open-toed sports sandal with Velcro adjustments; this allows for any swelling.



### **How long will be foot be swollen for?**

Your foot will be swollen for some time after surgery. The swelling will gradually reduce over time but takes up to a year to finally settle.

### **Can I go home in a car after surgery?**

You are perfectly safe to travel as a passenger in a car following foot surgery. It is better to travel in the front seat with your foot up, or ideally in the back seat with your leg across the seat.

### **What happens when I get home?**

For the first two weeks at home you should restrict your activity with plenty of rest, keeping your foot elevated on a pillow or stool. This will reduce the swelling, which in turn helps to reduce pain. It is advisable to have someone to help you at home, as seven simple tasks such as making a cup of tea and carrying it when you are using crutches are a problem - especially if you are non-weight bearing.

If you have problems please contact my office during office hours. Outside office hours you can contact the hospital.

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Cambridge  
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