

ANKLE FRACTURES AND FOOT FRACTURES REHABILITATION PROTOCOL

Bone healing requires immobilization. Bones take an average of 7 weeks to heal about 70% of normal strength. Once healing has started, the process can be stimulated through controlled, progressive strengthening. Common fractures and fusions may follow these guidelines.

Weight Bearing:

- Strict non-weight bearing for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Advance weight bearing over 4 weeks.

Brace Use:

- Weeks 1-6: complete immobilization in boot or cast.
- Weeks 7-10: in boot when out of bed.
- Weeks 11-12: boot for work/school. Brace for therapy and home.
- Week 13: brace until stable proprioception with eyes closed.
- Wear brace for all “at risk” activities for one year.

Physical Therapy:

- Begins after 6 weeks of immobilization.

Modalities:

- As needed to improve edema and pain control first two weeks in therapy. Cryotherapy after sessions.

Range of Motion:

- Active only first two weeks of therapy.
- Passive stretch thereafter if not progressing.
- Motion to include those, hind foot, and ankle.

Strength:

- Isometrics first week of therapy.
- Progress from closed chain to open chain as pain and motion permit.
- Goal: Global ankle strength 90% of opposite leg.

Proprioception:

- Progress as tolerated. Recommend brace for all proprioception training.
- Goal: One-legged balance with eyes closed for 20 seconds.

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Home Exercise Program:

- Transition over to home exercise program when appropriate.

Note: Beware of increased swelling and pain which may indicate incompletely healed bone. Reduce weight bearing and therapy demands as indicated. Please call physician with any concerns. Patients with Diabetes should be delayed 2-4 weeks and should progress very slowly.

RETURN TO WORK PROTOCOL: ANKLE & FOOT FRACTURES

- **0-2 Weeks**
 - No work
- **3-8 Weeks**
 - Seated work only
 - Must use crutches or knee roller at all times
 - Cast or cast boot on at all times
 - May need to elevate foot to control swelling
 - No driving
 - No limits on upper extremity work
- **9-12 Weeks**
 - Must be in boot except while driving
 - Standing for 15 minutes per hour worked
 - Walking in boot for 15 minutes per hour
 - Stairs one time per hour
 - No squatting, kneeling, lifting or twisting
- **13-16 Weeks**
 - Must wear ankle brace or lace-up boot to work
 - Standing/walking for 30 minutes per hour
 - Avoid ladders and uneven ground
- **17 Weeks**
 - Return to regular duty

*If you have specific work needs or are progressing at a faster rate, please request a functional evaluation from your physical therapist.