



Preparing for Foot and Ankle Surgery

This leaflet is designed by clinicians and patients to provide general information about your planned foot and ankle surgery as you have been placed on the waiting list for surgery.

The next step is a pre-operative assessment. These assessments are usually carried out in the Pre – operative assessment unit GWH <https://www.gwh.nhs.uk/contact-us/maps-and-directions/floor-plans/> . This assessment is either face to face or via a phone call. It is also important to have a list of up-to-date medication, and any allergies/sensitivities as you will be asked about these.

Things to prepare before day surgery

- **Food:** Mobility for the first few weeks following your surgery will be significantly reduced. Therefore preparing some food and/or arrangement of deliveries is advised.
- **Support at home:** For day-surgery operations you must have somebody at home with you for at least 24 hours following your surgery. Cleaning around the home will be difficult in the first few weeks after your operation, please arrange help with this.
- **Pets:** If you have animals that need walking, please arrange for someone to walk them.
- **Showering/Bathing:** Following surgery do not get your foot or cast wet until the incision or wound is fully healed. We recommend half-leg limbo covers <https://limboproducts.co.uk/>.
- **Walking aids:** Most patients will receive a special post-operative shoe or CAM boot on the day of surgery. However some surgery requires a below knee cast which means you will be **non-weight bearing, which will require the use of crutches**. If you require crutches, it is recommended to practise with crutches/zimmer frame, hopping on the non-operated foot and going up and down stairs as required. Patients have found a 'Stride-on' easier to use (hire approximately . £15.50 per week or buy direct approx. £154). Cheaper second hand ones can be found on eBay or amazon (approximately . £99)



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- Improving your upper body strength if you will be using crutches is important.
- Here is a link to some upper limb exercises to prepare you for the use of crutches
https://gateway.physiotools.com/Print/P.aspx?PrintDataId=d02aaa95c8b142e_7994F8CF&PtVer=201901
- **Blood thinning injections:** If you require a non-weight bearing cast after surgery, you may need to self-inject a blood thinning agent. This will be explained to you on the day of surgery.
- **Post-operative pain relief:** Ensure you have a supply of appropriate pain relief post-surgery at home eg paracetamol and ibuprofen. We will advise you of other pain relief on the day of surgery. You will probably be having a local anaesthetic block to manage your initial pain. This will help keep you comfortable in the initial hours after surgery.
- **Vitamin Supplements:** We recommend taking Vitamin C supplements of 500-1000mg daily for four weeks from the day of your surgery. If you are having a major fusion of bones then we also suggest a Vitamin D supplement 1000i.u. you can get vitamin D supplements online. This is sold separately and not part of a multivitamin. Your surgeon will advise you on this.
- **Smoking:** We would strongly advise that you stop cigarette/vape/recreational substance smoking for at least four weeks before your surgery, and for eight weeks afterwards. There is strong evidence to suggest that smoking can increase your risk of complications in the pre, post and perioperative phases. You can ask for advice and guidance about stopping smoking from your GP.
- **Plan your days after the surgery-** be aware that the first few weeks after your foot surgery you will be sitting and resting with your foot up more than usual. Think about how you will fill your days: some possible ideas are e-learning, crosswords, reading or box sets.

Day Surgery

Your surgical appointment letter will tell you where to go and what time to attend for your surgery. Day surgery patients should report to the Day Surgery Unit on the first floor of the hospital.

- **Travel:** Make sure you have someone to pick you up from your surgery, and arrange to drive you to and from any redressing and review appointments.
- **Medication:** List of up to date medications that you take and a record of any allergies.
- **Post-op information:** A post-operative information sheet will be provided on the day of surgery that outlines management following your surgery.



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Outpatient appointments will be in the Trauma and Orthopaedics Department post operatively.

Other things to consider

Every individual heals differently and some patients heal faster than others. Patients are always surprised at how long it can take to recover from foot surgery.

- **Driving-** the DVLA states that you can be fined up to £1,000 if you are involved in an accident or you do not let them know about a disability which may affect your driving (<https://www.gov.uk/surgery-and-driving>). Some operations will affect your ability to drive for a few weeks; some may affect you for months. Please ask your surgeons for specific details on likely timescales for driving after surgery. Ultimately the choice to drive is your responsibility but we will give you our best medical advice.
- **Returning to work-** if you are employed we can give you a fit note for your employer concerning time you will need off following your surgery. This will be surgery and job dependent i.e. if you work in an office environment or are in work where you are primarily walking or driving. A phased return to work may be necessary for some.
- **Holidays-** if you have any important commitments or holidays booked, please let the pre-assessment team know. You may wish to cancel or defer those plans or the date of surgery, as recovery following surgery can differ depending on your operation.
- **Flying** – This is likely to increase your risk of a Deep Vein Thrombosis or Pulmonary Embolus (dangerous blood clots in your legs or lungs) following foot surgery. Flights should be avoided during your post-operative recovery if possible.
- **Returning to sporting activities** –The healing time of bone and other tissue varies greatly depending on a number of factors. After the initial phase of wound healing, you will be advised on how to progress your weight bearing, foot wear and activity levels. You may be advised to start with low impact activities initially (swimming/cycling). Please ask your surgeon for specific advice on planned activities for the first six months after your operation.

This is dependent on the type of surgery undertaken, your overall health and social situation.

Stop Smoking support link: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>



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Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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