

## **POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: LOWER EXTREMITY FRACTURES**

### **Diet**

- You may resume your regular diet without restrictions. However, start slow with clear liquids and gradually work your way back to your normal diet. This will help prevent nausea and vomiting.

### **Wound Care**

- You will have a splint applied to your surgical extremity that is secured with an ACE wrap. Please leave your splint on: this will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- It is ok to shower or sponge bathe 4 days after surgery. You **MUST** keep your leg clean and dry. This usually requires you to keep your leg outside of the shower and use saran wrap, waterproof bandages, or a large plastic bag to protect your post-op splint application. We will give you further instructions on when you can shower normally at your first post-op visit.
- Do not submerge your surgical leg or soak in a hot tub, swimming pool, or bath until 4 weeks post-operatively when your incisions have completely healed.
- Any sutures or skin closure will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- It is common after surgery to experience swelling, discomfort, or a sensation of numbness/tingling surrounding the splint. You can loosen the ace wrap as needed (while still maintaining ample compression) to reduce the swelling and accompanying symptoms; please reapply compression when the symptoms subside.

### **DVT Prevention**

- Please remain ambulatory and perform ankle pumps to help prevent blood clots.
- Sometimes we have to prescribe a blood thinner to help prevent blood clots (especially if you have a personal or family history of DVT/pulmonary embolism). If discussed prior to surgery please defer to our recommendations given pre-op. Unless recommended you do not need to take any aspirin or other DVT prophylaxis.
- If you are traveling after surgery please let us know: we advise that you wait at least one week between surgery date and travel. Please see below for some general tips for preventing blood clots when traveling:
  - Get up on the plane to walk every hour or if driving stop every 1-2 hours to get up and walk
  - Stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeine
  - Take 325mg Aspirin the day before, day of, and day after the travel (if advised)
  - Perform ankle pump exercises during travel
  - If you experience pain or swelling in your calf please call our office immediately or go to a local emergency department for evaluation.

### **Post-Operative Activity and Weight Bearing**

- After surgery you will remain NON-WEIGHTBEARING using your crutches or walker until your first post-op appointment. We will provide additional instructions at that time.
- Please elevate the knee frequently in order to help decrease swelling/discomfort. When elevating, keep the surgical extremity positioned with the foot higher than the knee and with your toes pointed towards the ceiling to avoid swelling into the foot and ankle. Place a pillow under your ankle for comfort and not behind the knee when elevating.
- Physical therapy instructions will be provided at your first post-operative appointment.

### **Cold Therapy**

- Ice should be used to help reduce pain and swelling. Use it as often as possible the first 3 days after surgery, alternating 20 minutes on and 20 minutes off. After the third day, use it at least 3-5 times a day for 20 minutes until pain and swelling have resolved.
- Please keep in mind that it may be difficult to ice through your splint and ace wrap; you can apply ice to any area adjacent to the surgical joint to attempt to find relief using this modality.

### **Pain Medication**

- Take your pain medication as prescribed. This usually means 1 tablet every 4 hours for mild pain or 2 tablets every 4-6 hours for more severe pain. Do not take any additional Tylenol when taking these narcotic medications.
- You can use Tylenol once your pain is more manageable in order to transition from narcotic use. DO NOT take NSAIDs (Aleve or Ibuprofen) as they impair bone healing.
- The narcotic pain medication can cause constipation if you take it regularly. Some treatments include prescribed stool softeners, fiber bars, Metamucil, or prune juice.
- You are not permitted to drive while taking your narcotic pain medication.
- The pain medication can cause nausea so always take it with food.

**\*\*Effective in 2014: Federal regulation prevents the ability to call or fax post-operative medications to pharmacies (including refills). Every prescription must be an original and picked up in person: we cannot fax or call in these medications to your pharmacy.**

**\*\*Please call a minimum of 24 hours prior to needing additional medications in order to provide you with the handwritten copy. All requests for prescriptions prior to the weekend must be received by Thursday at noon.** Failure to plan accordingly and contact our office prior to needing a refill may prevent you from obtaining your medication.

### **Bone Health**

- While fractures can happen for a variety of reasons, sub-optimal bone health can be a risk factor. Taking Vitamin D and Calcium during the duration of your treatment can help promote fracture healing. The following are suggested doses and are available over the counter: 1000 units Vitamin D by mouth daily and 1000mg Calcium by mouth daily.

**Notify the Office if you Experience the Following**

- Flu-like symptoms, nausea/vomiting, temperature of 101.5 degrees or higher, severe chills; foul odor, redness, or increased tenderness or drainage from the incision. These are signs of a possible infection. You may need to report to an Emergency Room.
- Hot tender area or unusually large amounts of swelling in either calf or other area of the leg; chest pain, shortness of breath or coughing up blood. These are signs of a possible blood clot and you may need to report to an Emergency Room or call an ambulance.
- **If you have any other URGENT problem** call the office (815) 744-4551 Monday through Friday during regular office hours or report to an emergency room.

**Follow-up**

- You should already have your post-operative appointment scheduled; this should be scheduled for 10-14 days after your surgery date. Please call the office with any questions or to confirm your appointment at (815) 741-5200.