ORIF Post-Operative Instructions

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DIET
- Anesthetic drugs used during surgery may cause nausea for the first 24 hours. If nausea is encountered, drink only clear liquids and light food (jello, soups, dry crackers, toast). If nausea and vomiting becomes severe or the patient shows signs of dehydration (lack of urination), please call for further instructions.
- If you are not nauseated please progress to a normal diet as tolerated.

WOUND CARE
- After surgery the wound is covered with gauze and placed into a plaster splint. Much like a cast this should NOT be removed or changed until you come back to clinic for your post operative appointment.
- It is normal for the ankle to bleed and swell following surgery – if blood soaks onto the ACE bandage, do not become alarmed – reinforce with additional dressing. If bright red blood persists despite icing and elevation, please call for further instructions.
- To avoid infection, keep surgical incisions clean and dry – you may shower by placing a large garbage bag over your leg starting 48 hours after surgery – NO immersion of operative leg (i.e. bath, hot tub, sauna, or pool)

ICE THERAPY
- Begin ice packs immediately after surgery. Icing is very important for the first 5 to 7 days post operatively.
- While initial post operative dressing is in place, ice should be applied for 20 minute periods, 4 to 6 times a day.
- Remember to keep leg elevated at or above chest level during icing. Care must be taken with icing to avoid frost bite to the skin. Do NOT apply ice directly to the skin.

MEDICATIONS
- Pain medication is injected into the surgery site during surgery – this will wear off within 8-12 hours
- Most patients will require some narcotic pain medication for a short period of time – this can be taken as per directions on the bottle
- It is not uncommon for patients to encounter more pain on the first or second day after surgery. This is the time when swelling peaks. Using the pain medication will help control pain with little risk of complication. Taking pain medication before bed time will assist in sleeping. If you are prescribed narcotic pain medication (ie: Percocet, Norco, Vicodin) you can supplement these medications with 200 mg or 400 mg of ibuprofen every 4 – 6 hours.
- Common side effects of the pain medication are nausea, drowsiness, and constipation – to decrease the side effects, take medication with food, drink lots of fluids and follow a high fiber diet – if constipation occurs, consider taking an over-the-counter laxative (colace or senakot)
- If you are having significant problems with nausea/vomiting or constipation, please contact us for further instructions.
- You should resume your normal medications for other conditions the day after surgery, unless instructed differently by your physician.
- Do not drive a car or operate machinery while taking the narcotic medication. Driving while under the influence of narcotic pain medication is dangerous and discouraged in all patients.
ACTIVITY
- Elevate the operative ankle to chest level whenever possible to decrease swelling
- Do not place pillows under knees (i.e. do not maintain knee in a flexed or bent position), but rather place pillows under foot/ankle
- Use crutches to assist with walking – you are to remain non-weight bearing unless instructed by the physician
- Do not engage in activities which increase knee pain/swelling (prolonged periods of standing or walking) over the first 7-10 days following surgery
- Avoid long periods of sitting (without leg elevated) or long distance traveling for 2 weeks
- NO driving until instructed otherwise by physician
- May return to sedentary work ONLY or school 3-4 days after surgery, if pain is tolerable

EXERCISE
- Move the toes continuously throughout the day to reduce the possibility of a blood clot in your calf (extremely uncommon)
- Formal physical therapy (PT) will begin as directed by physician.

EMERGENCIES**
Contact Dr. Sherman or Tammy at 573-884-4767 if any of the following are present:
- Painful swelling or numbness
- Unrelenting pain
- Fever (over 101°F - it is normal to have a low grade fever for the first day or two following surgery) or chills
- Redness around incisions
- Color change in leg or feet
- Continuous drainage or bleeding from incision (a small amount of drainage is expected)
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive nausea/vomiting

**If you have an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, contact the afterhours number (573-882-4141) and you will be connected to our orthopaedic surgeon on call or Dr. Sherman.
**If you have an emergency that requires immediate attention, proceed to the nearest emergency room.

FOLLOW-UP CARE/QUESTIONS
You will follow up in our office in 7 – 10 days after your surgery. At this time the sutures will be removed. Your progress will be evaluated. You will be asked to continue your home exercise program or begin organized physical therapy.

For questions or concerns prior to your post op visit you may contact Tammy at 573-884-4767 or email at youngtl@health.missouri.edu. If you get her voicemail please leave a message and she will return your call as soon as she can.