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How long to recover from a fractured ankle

McGarvey WC, Greaser MC. Ankle and midfoot fractures and dislocations. In: Porter DA, Schon LC, eds. Baxter's The Foot and Ankle in Sport. 3rd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2021:chap 6.Rose NGW, Green TJ. Ankle and foot. In: Walls RM, Hockberger RS, Gausche-Hill M, eds. Rosen's Emergency Medicine: Concepts and Clinical Practice. 9th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2018:chap 51.Rudloff MI. Fractures of the lower extremity. In: Azar FM, Beaty JH, Canale ST, eds. Campbell's Operative Orthopaedics. 13th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2017:chap 54. October 28th, 2019 By serving as an orthopaedic surgeon for over two decades, I have been able to treat countless patients with ankle fractures. Over the years, my treatment has evolved toward a better approach for patient recovery. Through immense experience, I have discovered that the typical casts and weight-bearing restrictions implemented on patients after surgery were not always the best option. Instead, I provide my patients with a removable boot. This practice allows for better results. Now, the methods I use to treat ankle fracture patients at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute are being shared and practiced among orthopaedic surgeons all over the world. Patient Recovery from Ankle Fractures Simply put, all I've done for the past 20 years is fix broken bones. Sometimes I fix broken bones that other orthopaedic surgeons are unable to fix. These fractures are often unusual and difficult to treat. Many times, I care for fractures that have not healed properly after a previous treatment. As a result, fixing routine fractures has become straight forward. I've become accustomed to pushing for the optimal outcome, even with the more straightforward procedures. As an orthopaedic surgeon at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute, it is my goal to push the limits to provide patients with the best treatment options, and outcome. Ankle fractures, which generally involve a combination of breaks in the bones of the ankle and injuries to the ligaments that hold them together, are common injuries. They are often caused by the ankle rolling inward or outward. They can range from less serious ankle avulsion injuries to more severe situations in which multiple bones have breaks. Ankle Fracture Treatment Often, I find that surgery is required to treat ankle fractures. Such a procedure allows me to restore proper alignment to the broken bone, which is essential for full recovery. Because arthritis is not an uncommon occurrence after an ankle fracture, performing surgery to recreate a normal ankle joint is often the most effective way to minimize this risk. I pride myself in offering my patients at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute with the best treatment options, specific to their ankle condition. A Modern Approach To Ankle Fracture Trauma Many surgeons who treat ankle fractures place patients in a cast and restrict weight-bearing. I have always felt that was overkill. For the past 15 years, I have been placing most patients in a removable boot after surgery, allowing them to bear weight right away. For years this was unusual. While in Seattle, at the University of Washington, we decided to write this article providing evidence for this practice. Simultaneously, a large group of Canadian surgeons studied this very issue and found the same results: patients have a much easier recovery after ankle fracture surgery with this protocol and faced no risk that many orthopaedic surgeons previously assumed. This study concluded that, in certain ankle fracture patients, immediate weight-bearing as tolerated is "a safe alternative to a period of protected weight-bearing", such as a cast. In fact, this earlier weight-bearing was shown to be associated with several benefits, including better mobility, a decreased hospital stay, and an earlier return to work. Certainly, not having to wear a cast and being able to bear weight makes getting around much easier. Bottom line, because of this practice, my patients have a much easier recovery from ankle fracture surgery. It may not matter in the long run, but some people care about the short run as well as the long run. I would bet that if you could give patients the choice upfront, the vast majority would want this treatment protocol for their ankle fracture treatment. I sure would. Treatment at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute This approach to ankle fracture treatment and recovery is just one example of how the team at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute is making revolutionary strides in orthopaedics every day. As international leaders in research and development, we are constantly looking for a better way to serve our patients. Of course, we do not stop with just our patients; my story is just one example of the way that our methods have been forerunners in innovation that help patients all over the world. For more information about ankle fracture treatments at Rothman Orthopaedic Institute, or to schedule an appointment, contact us today at 1-800-321-9999. The ankle is made up of three bones: the tibia (shin bone), which forms the inside, front, and back of the anklethe fibula, which forms the outside of the anklethe talus, a small bone that sits between the tibia and fibula and the heel boneThe ends of these bones are called malleoli. The tibia has a medial (inside) malleoli and a posterior malleoli. The fibula forms the lateral (outside) malleoli. A broken ankle (ankle fracture) occurs when the malleoli are broken. These fractures are very common. Ankle fractures happen with twisting of the ankle, falls, car accidents, or other injury. One, two, or all three malleoli can be broken. Ankle fractures can be displaced (out of place) or non-displaced. Symptoms of an ankle fracture include pain especially with weight bearing, swelling, bruising, and problems with ankle motion. X-rays help determine if treatment from a foot and ankle orthopaedic surgeon is needed.The main goal of ankle fracture surgery is to put the ankle joint back in place and to stabilize the bones to heal. Getting the ankle joint back in place helps to decrease the risk of developing arthritis of the ankle. Stabilizing the ankle with plates and screws may allow earlier motion.DiagnosisWhen the ankle fracture is unstable or in bad position, surgery is needed to repair the ankle. In some cases, the bones of the ankle may poke through the skin. These are called open ankle fractures and require surgery.Ankle fracture surgery is not needed if the ankle is in position and stable despite the fracture. Surgery may be too risky when patients have a severe medical condition Antibiotics are given shortly before the start of the surgery. Once the patient receives antibiotics and anesthesia, the surgery can safely begin. Incisions are made through the skin of the ankle where the bones are broken. The breaks in the bone are then repositioned and held in place with implants (screws and plates). After the ankle fracture is repaired, the patient's leg is placed in either a protective splint, cast or boot. Some patients go home after surgery the same day while others may stay overnight in the hospital.Specific TechniqueMost ankle fracture surgery involves open reduction and internal fixation (ORIF). An incision is made over the ankle to see the fractured bones. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the pieces of the broken bones are placed back together (open reduction). The broken bones are then held together (internal fixation) in this correct position with metal plates and/or screws. This internal fixation provides stability so movement can begin shortly after surgery as the ankle fracture heals. Left, a bimalleolar ankle fracture before surgery. Right, the ankle fracture after it has been fixed. Surgical treatment of ankle fractures allows patients to regain ankle function while the bones and joint heal. Immediately after surgery, your ankle will be immobilized for a few weeks. Once the wounds are healed, you will be fitted for either a cast or a boot. Many surgeons use a removable boot. The boot protects the ankle as it heals but can be removed to allow washing, wound checks, and icing.Once the broken bones start to heal, you will be told when you can put weight on the ankle in your cast or boot. You are then allowed to wean out of the cast or boot. You can progress to normal activities once the bones are fully healed. Some patients may need physical therapy for their ankle to regain full movement and strength. While everyone is different, it may take up to a year after surgery for some patients to regain ankle function.Risks and ComplicationsAll surgeries come with possible complications, including the risks associated with anesthesia, infection, damage to nerves and blood vessels, and bleeding or blood clots.Potential long-term problems after ankle fracture surgery include ankle joint stiffness, weakness, and arthritis. Possible complications include infection and problems with healing. Factors that increase risks after ankle fracture surgery include diabetes, steroid use, and cigarette smoking. FAQsWill my ankle hardware (plate and/or screws) have to be removed at some point?Plates and screws used to fix an ankle fracture are not removed if they are not causing problems. Most people do not have problems with the plate and screws. In rare cases, the plate and screws can cause some pain or irritation. When this happens, the hardware may be removed after the fracture is healed, about a year from the original surgery.Originally written by David Levine, MDLast reviewed by Naomi Shields, MD, 2019 The American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS) offers information on this site as an educational service. The content of FootCareMD, including text, images, and graphics, is for informational purposes only. The content is not intended to substitute for professional medical advice, diagnoses or treatments. If you need medical advice, use the "Find a Surgeon" search to locate a foot and ankle orthopaedic surgeon in your area. how long does it take to recover from a fractured ankle. how long does it take to fully recover from a fractured ankle. how long does it take to recover from a fractured ankle with surgery. how long will a fractured ankle take to heal. how long is recovery from fractured ankle

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