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Preparing for Foot & Ankle Surgery

Information for patients



MATTHEW CICHERO
SOUTH WEST FOOT SURGERY



Foot & Ankle Surgery

This leaflet is designed by clinicians and patients to provide general information about your planned foot and ankle surgery.

You have received this information sheet because you have been placed on the waiting list for surgery. The next step is a pre-operative assessment.

This assessment is either face to face or via a phone call. It is also important to have a list of up-to-date medications/tablets that you take and a record of any allergies/sensitivities to hand 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	<p>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 the 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 approx. £15.50 per week or buy direct approx. £154). Cheaper second hand ones can be found on eBay or Amazon (approx. £99).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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://southwestfootsurgery.co.uk/ule.
Blood thinning injections	If you are required to be non-weight bearing after surgery (cast/crutches), 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, for example paracetamol. We will advise 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 4 weeks from the day of your surgery. If you are having a major fusion of bones then we 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	<p>We would strongly advise that you stop cigarette/Vape/recreational substance smoking for at least 4 weeks before your surgery, and for 8 weeks afterwards.</p> <p>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.</p>
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, 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 present to the main reception desk of the hospital prior to being admitted for your procedure.

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/tablets that you take and a record of any allergies.

Post-operative information

A post-operative information sheet will be provided on the day of surgery that outlines management following your procedure. You will be seen for your follow-up appointments in the outpatient department post-operatively.

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 surgeon 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 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 (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, footwear 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 6 months after your operation. This is dependent on the type of surgery undertaken, your overall health and social situation.




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South West Foot Surgery

Mr. Matthew Cichero FCPodS FACPS MPoBAppSci(Pod)
Consultant Podiatric Surgeon

Private Secretary Contact

Tel: 01793 272318 **Fax:** 01793 272315 **Email:** secretary@southwestfootsurgery.co.uk

Web: www.southwestfootsurgery.co.uk  [southwestfootsurgery](https://www.facebook.com/southwestfootsurgery)