

LANCASTER ORTHOPEDIC GROUP

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The ankle and why we fix it

Your ankle joint is made up of 3 bones – the tibia (the shin bone), the fibula and the talus. When you have an ankle fracture, the bones and the joint can shift out of place. If this is not fixed surgically, you can develop several complications. One of these is advanced arthritis, which will make using your ankle painful in the future.

How do you fix the broken bones?

The bones are put back into the correct place, and then fixed in position with a combination of plates and screws.

Length of Stay

Depending on the extent of your injury, this will either be a same day surgery or an overnight stay.

Anesthesia

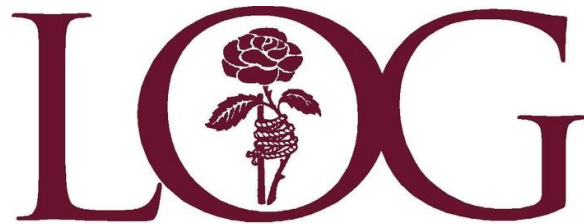
Patients usually have two types of anesthesia for this surgery. The first is general anesthesia, which means you are asleep. The second type of anesthesia is a nerve block. Your leg will be numb and will feel very strange. The nerve block will last about 12-14 hours. The anesthesiologist will speak to you on the day of surgery. The ultimate choice of anesthesia technique is up to you and your anesthesiologist.

Incisions

You will have 2-4 incisions around your ankle. Ensuring that these incisions heal is very important in order to prevent infections or wound complications. After your surgery, you will be asked to lie down for up to 23 hours a day, with your leg elevated at or above the level of your heart (3-4 pillows).

Pain

You will have pain medication prescribed for you prior to discharge. After the nerve block wears off you will have discomfort. Most of the pain is related to your surgery but should resolve a lot within 48-72 hours.



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Driving

If your right ankle is involved, then you will not be able to drive until 8 – 10 weeks after surgery. This is for safety reasons, as you need to heal to the point where you have no hesitation in using the brake pedal when driving.

Dressings

You will go home with a splint in place. Keep this on until your first visit.

Physical Therapy

If you choose, you will start physical therapy after you can put full weight down on your extremity. This will involve regaining your range of motion and gait training. Some patients prefer to avoid physical therapy and work on it on their own.

Restrictions

Recovery from ankle fracture surgery is about four months. During that time, you will have restrictions on the use of your operative ankle.

- **0-6 weeks:** No weight can be put down with the leg. If you are able to do desk work, you can return to work after your first visit and you are comfortable enough to do so.
- **6 wks-3 mo:** You will gradually put more weight down on your leg over the next 6 weeks. You will be given further instructions on this at your post-operative visits.
- **3 mo:** You may return to full duty after you have regained range of motion and feel comfortable on your leg.

Swelling

Swelling is a normal part of the healing process. Swelling in the ankle may be noted for 6-12 months after surgery; Even after the pain has resolved and the X-rays demonstrate full healing, the ankle may still swell for a year.