

Healthier Communities,  
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Foot and ankle surgery

Information for patients



**This booklet has been created by the orthopaedic physiotherapy team. It contains information about the foot surgery that you have been advised to have and aims to answer some of the questions you may have about the operation and your stay in hospital.**

## **About foot and ankle surgery at Sherwood Forest Hospitals**

Foot and ankle surgery is frequently done at Sherwood Forest Hospitals by our expert surgeons who specialise in foot and ankle conditions.

At our King's Mill Hospital site, there is an elective orthopaedic ward (ward 21) and an elective day case unit (DCU). At our Newark site, there is an elective day case unit (Minster ward). The ward and site of your surgery will be discussed with you by your consultant team in the outpatient clinic before your operation.

You will be admitted to one of these wards during your stay in hospital. On the ward, a 'named nurse' will be allocated to you to co-ordinate your nursing care. You will also have named physiotherapists to supervise your rehabilitation.

You will usually be admitted to the hospital on the day of your operation. It will have been discussed with you before your surgery what your expected length of stay will be. If you think you will need transport to get home or help when you get home, please tell your named nurse when you first come in.

## **What will happen before my operation?**

You will be seen by your consultant surgeon and physiotherapists in the preoperative clinic. Your consultant will explain to you the type of operation you will be having and outline the risks involved.

The physiotherapists will then discuss with you your living situation and provide you with a suitable mobility aid to use during your recovery. You will be taught how to manage non-weight bearing, which means you will not be able to put any weight through your operated foot and will need, with the assistance of walking aids, to hop (your consultant will discuss with you how long you will be non-weight bearing for).

The physiotherapists will also be able to discuss with you any equipment needs you may have. Equipment can be provided for you in order to help you recover and maintain your independence when home. This will be assessed on an individual basis prior to surgery.

It is very important to think now about your home situation before your surgery in order to ensure everything is as easy as possible for you after your operation. This may involve:

- Arranging a bed to be moved downstairs in order to avoid using the stairs.
- Moving furniture to ensure everything you will need is just a short distance away, you have a clear path you to walk through and that there are no trip hazards.

- Arranging support from friends or family for when you are home. This includes somebody to take you home to and from hospital, make your meals and help with the washing and cleaning.
- Doing extra shopping, cooking and freezing food to ensure you have plenty of what you need once you are home.
- Arranging for somebody to look after any pets you feel you will struggle to look after while you are non-weight bearing.

**Arranging these things before your operation can result in fewer days in hospital.**

## Using your elbow crutches

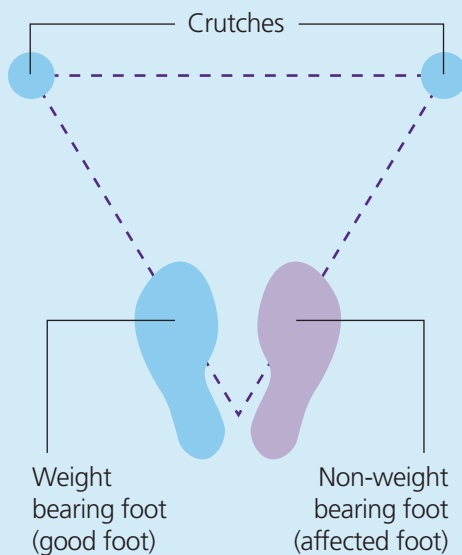
To start, ensure your crutches are in front of your foot in the tripod position as in the drawing to the right. This allows you to lean forward to keep your balance.

Both crutches then move forward together a short distance. Ensure you do not move your crutches too far forward as this can cause you to lose your balance.

Then take a small hop approximately half way to the crutches. Ensure you do not hop too close or through the crutches as this again can cause you to lose balance. **The crutches must remain in front of you at all times.**

If you are unable to use elbow crutches, we can try a Zimmer frame instead.

### Tripod Position



### Things to remember about using crutches:

- Make sure your arms are out of the crutches when standing up and sitting down. Hold the crutches in one hand to make the letter H. Once you are stood, you can put your hands through the crutches. This will be demonstrated to you by your physiotherapist.
- If the rubber on the bottom of your crutches is worn down, you can bring them in to clinic 10 and they can be replaced.
- Once your physiotherapist has adjusted yours elbow crutches, do not readjust them.

## Operation Day

You will be informed what time to arrive at the hospital before your operation. On arrival, you'll be greeted and taken through to the ward. Your anaesthetist will see you on the morning of your operation to discuss your anaesthetic with you and aim to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

You will also be seen by your surgeon to discuss the planned operation. You will be able to eat and drink as usual the day before your operation. You may be able to have an early morning drink even on the day of your operation, but you need to discuss this with your nurse before you have any drink.

**You must not smoke after midnight the day before the operation.**

## What to bring

You need to bring in with you any medicines that you are taking, toiletries, a towel, nightwear and some loose and comfortable clothing. Please also bring the mobility aid the therapy team have provided you and leave all valuables at home. It is also important to bring a change of clothes, in case you are required to stay in for a couple of days.

## After your surgery

Once you come out of the operating theatre you will be taken into the recovery suite where you will stay until your observations (blood pressure, heart rate etc.) return to normal.

You will then go through to the ward where you will be able to eat and drink and be seen again by your physiotherapists. Your physiotherapists will review you with your walking aid and practice steps and stairs if required. Occupational therapists will also assess you in order to ensure that you can complete activities you will need to do at home. Any further questions or concerns can be addressed by your therapists during your assessments.

You may be required to stay in hospital for a short period to monitor your recovery. Each person and operation is different and some people require a longer hospital stay than others. You may need a new cast applied before going home but your swelling will need a couple of days to settle first.

You will be non-weight bearing for a minimum of 6 weeks. You will be given an appointment for 10-14 days after your operation to assess and clean the wound, remove the stitches and apply a new plaster cast. You will also have a follow-up appointment booked with your consultant for 4-6 weeks after your operation. At this point, you may be allowed to begin weight bearing and will be referred for physiotherapy.

## Once you are home

### Swelling management

Swelling is very normal following an operation, and on occasions this can last up to 12 months after this type of operation.

Ensuring your foot is elevated by pillows for most of the time is a good way of helping to reduce the swelling. We recommend keeping your foot above your knee whenever you are resting.



### Driving

You will not be allowed to drive while you are non-weight bearing or wearing a cast or boot. It is advised you discuss this with your consultant when you go back for your follow up appointment after your operation.

### Getting around

Mobilising little and often is very important in order to manage your pain and swelling. Remember to know your limits once you get home and gradually build up over a few weeks the distance you are mobilising. Remember, being non-weight bearing can be very hard work, and you can get tired very quickly. So until you are more confident getting around, do not try far distances.

### Work

You may return to work for light activity as soon as you are comfortable and your employer is happy for you to return. If you require time off work please ask your doctors on the ward or GP for a FIT (sickness) note.

### Pain

Pain is very normal and expected, but it will gradually improve over a few weeks. Ensure you are taking pain killers regularly as prescribed, elevate your foot when you are not mobilising and keep your foot off the floor. If you have any side effects from your pain relief, discuss them with your GP.

### Showering/washing

You cannot get your plaster cast wet. If it does become wet, it can fall apart. We recommend to strip wash while you are sat down with your foot elevated.

### Sleeping

It is best to sleep on your back with your operated foot supported on two pillows. The aim is to keep your foot above your knee. Alternatively, you can lie on the side of your non-operated leg and support the operated foot on a pillow.

## Using the stairs

The stairs can be concerning when you are non-weight bearing. The physiotherapist will practice the stairs with you, however, if you feel you will not manage this please take a bed down stairs ahead of surgery.

### Going up stairs:

- Use one crutch and your handrail/banister. Remember to keep the injured foot off the floor.
- Place your injured foot behind you, bending at the knee.
- Push through the crutch and handrail to hop up on to the first step.
- Bring the crutch up to the step you are on.

### Going down stairs:

- Place the crutch on the step below you and move your hand down the rail in line with the crutch.
- Place your injured foot out in front of you.
- Put your weight through the crutch and hand rail to hop down on to the step below.
- We recommend that once you are home to have supervision from a family member or friend on the first few occasions you are attempting the stairs, until you build up your confidence.

### If you do not have a handrail or banister:

- Use the other crutch as well.
- You may go up and down stairs on your bottom. Place an armless chair at the top of the stairs to assist standing.

**Please discuss any concerns regarding the stairs with your physiotherapist.**

## Our advice

- Getting your home set up before you go in to hospital is very important in ensuring you get home quicker. Consider having a bed downstairs or reorganising your furniture for the short term.
- Managing being non-weight bearing can be tricky, especially if you have not done it before, so it is very important you practice regularly coming up to your operation.
- Always take your time when you are up and about in order to avoid any loss of balance.
- Keep on top of your pain relief provided.

## Potential risks of foot and ankle surgery

It is expected for you to get pain and swelling from surgery, however, some of the following can also occur:

- Excessive stiffness, swelling, bleeding and pain.
- DVT (blood clots).
- Nerve damage.
- Recurrent instability.
- Non-union of the bone (this means when a bone fails to heal).

## Once you are home, if you have any of the following symptoms please contact 111 immediately:

- Excessive pain.
- Swelling and redness tracking up the leg.
- Worsening pins and needles.
- A burning sensation in the foot or calf.

## Useful contact numbers:

- **King's Mill Hospital** - telephone 01623 622515.
- **Newark Hospital** - telephone 01636 681681.
- **Mr Chilamkurthi's secretary** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 4119 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm).
- **Mr Kothari's secretary** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 4175 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm).
- **King's Mill Day Case Unit** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 3048 (Monday to Friday, 24 hours).
- **King's Mill orthopaedic ward** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 3640 (Monday to Sunday, 24 hours).
- **King's Mill physiotherapy department** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 3221 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm).
- **Newark Hospital physiotherapy department** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 5885 (Monday to Friday, 8am-5pm).







## Equipment needs

If you return home without your equipment or need to return the equipment after use, you can contact the following:

- **Orthopaedic Occupational Therapy** - telephone 01623 622515, extension 4269 (Monday to Friday, 8am-4pm).
- **Red Cross (Nottinghamshire patients)** - telephone 0345 127 2911.
- **Medequip (Derbyshire patients)** - telephone 01773 604426.

### Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

### Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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