



ANKLE REPLACEMENT

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should get good relief from pain, and be able to walk more easily. The ankle still moves and feels more natural than a fusion.

Are there any alternatives to ankle replacement?

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can help control the pain of arthritis.

Using a walking stick on the opposite side to the affected ankle can make walking easier. A plastic splint or stiff ankle boot with a cushioned heel is sometimes helpful.

Physiotherapy may help to strengthen weak muscles.

A steroid injection into your ankle joint can sometimes reduce pain and stiffness for several months.

An arthroscopy (keyhole surgery) to clean out your ankle joint can give some relief for 6 to 12 months. The other main alternative to a replacement is an ankle fusion (stiffening the joint to remove the painful arthritic joint surfaces)

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible, but it is a long operation (2+ hours) so most people have a general anaesthetic

Your surgeon will make a cut on the front of your ankle and remove the damaged joint surfaces. They will replace these with an artificial joint made of metal and plastic. Bone grows onto the porous metal back surface of the implant, anchoring it securely to the bone.

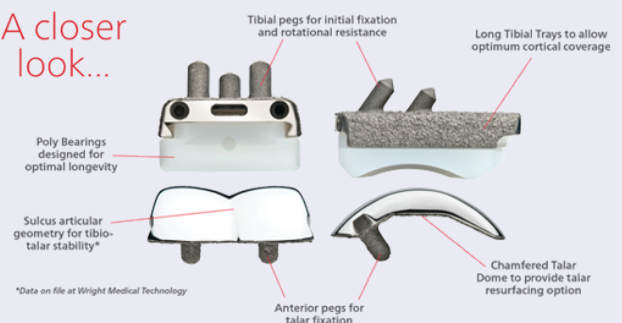
How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now will reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight. Ideally, you should weigh 90kg or less for an ankle replacement, heavier people are better suited to have an ankle fusion.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

A closer look...





What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death (risk of dying: 1 in 1,000 in the first 90 days after surgery).

General complications of any operation

- bleeding
- infection of the surgical site (wound)
- allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- acute kidney injury
- difficulty passing urine
- venous thromboembolism
- chest infection
- heart attack
- stroke

Specific complications of this operation

- damage to nerves around your ankle
- damage to blood vessels around your ankle
- slow healing of your wound
- fracture of the bone on the inner side of your ankle
- infection in your ankle
- failure of your ankle replacement
- continued discomfort
- severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of your foot and ankle

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after 2-3 nights, usually on a blood thinner to reduce the chance of blood clots.

To start with, spend most of the time with your leg raised on a chair or footstool.

You will need to have the cast then moon-boot on for about 6 weeks. You will need walking aids until you can walk well without them (crutches, knee scooter). We see you for a check X-ray 6 weeks after surgery, then physiotherapy and weightbearing can start

Most people make a good recovery, have less pain, and can move about better. An artificial ankle never feels quite the same as a normal ankle, and it is important to look after it in the long term. You will be mostly recovered by about 4-6 months, but it can potentially keep improving for 12-18 months, just like a hip or knee replacement.

An ankle replacement can wear out with time, and you may need further surgery later for bone grafting of cysts that can develop, or new spurs that can slowly grow back. 85% of ankle replacements are still functioning after 10 years, but some people do need revision surgery (“redo” the ankle).

Advice once you're home:

If you suffer wound bleeding, fever/chills, or chest pain/coughing up blood, contact your surgeon or GP, or go to the local Emergency Dept.

Summary

Arthritis of your ankle is often the result of previous ankle injuries or arthritis. If you have severe pain, stiffness and disability, an ankle replacement should reduce your pain and still give you improved movement in your ankle.