

Arthrodesis Procedure of the Hindfoot and/or Ankle

An arthrodesis involves removing the cartilage surfaces of a joint, aligning the resultant raw bone surfaces, and solidly fixing them together with pins, staples, bone screws, and/or other fixation devices. Once healed, the previous joint between two bones is fused into solid bone.

Goals

- Eliminate motion at the fused joint(s).
- Stabilize the foot under the leg.
- Improve alignment of the midfoot, hindfoot, or ankle (dependent on which joints are fused).
- Reduce or eliminate pain associated with the painful joint or related condition.

Possible Alternatives to Surgery

- Footwear modifications or custom footwear
- Orthoses or braces
- Medications – oral or injected
- Permanent activity restriction
- Use of cane or other assistive device

Potential Complications / Risks

Infection of soft tissue or bone; Delayed healing or non-healing of skin, soft tissue, or bone; Thick, painful, or unsightly scar; Nerve injury, nerve entrapment, nerve pain, or numbness; Tendon injury or tendonitis; Prolonged swelling, pain, or recovery; Stiffness; Stress transfer and arthritis in adjacent joints; Circulation disturbance of skin, soft tissue, or bone; Incomplete relief of pain; Undercorrection or deformity; Overcorrection of deformity; Weakness or leg muscle atrophy; Intolerance of fixation devices; Change in shoe size or limitation of shoe options; Hematoma or bleeding complication; Complex regional pain syndrome; Phlebitis or pulmonary embolism; Loss of limb; Mild to life-threatening reaction to medications or anesthesia

Usual Post-Operative Care / Recovery

Wear a cast or cast splint for approximately 12 weeks; Maintain absolutely no weight bearing on the operated foot for approximately 8 weeks; Use elevation, rest, water-tight ice packs, and medications for pain and swelling control; Keep cast dry; Sutures are removed in 2-3 weeks; Use physical therapy after cast is discontinued; Return to closed shoes in 3-4 months; Return to sedentary activities and or occupation in 2-4 months; Return to demanding activities or occupation in 4-6 months; Full recovery in 6-12 months.