



Pre- and Post- Operative Exercises

Foot and ankle surgery can be daunting and to adequately prepare it is best to work on those muscles and joints that will be greatly affected by being partial or non-weightbearing for an extended period of time. The goal is to strengthen the limb that is unaffected as well as the joints above the affected ankle.

Pre-op Strengthening Exercises

Since the ankle is part of the lower extremity's kinetic chain, working on the hip flexors, extensors, hamstrings and calf muscles is advisable to maintain conditioning of the lower extremity. Consider the following recommendations from our team:

1. Hips (extensors, flexors, abductors): Leg lifts

Front: Start by lying on your back, bend one knee and keep foot against the table; straighten the leg of the side your exercising and keep the toes pointed toward the head; keep the leg straight and raise it so it is parallel with the bent knee; repeat for a set of 3; do 10 reps.

Sides: Turn your body to the side, the bottom leg is bent, the leg your exercising is straight; raise leg so it's parallel with the ground; keep toes pointed toward the head; do 3 sets of 10 reps; repeat on the other side.

Flip onto your belly: For ease, keep your knee bent; raise up toward the ceiling; repeat on the other leg; do 3 sets of 10 reps.

2. Knee (hamstrings): Heel slides

Sit on a flat surface with your leg out

Put a towel under your foot

Slide your foot toward your butt

Repeat on the other leg

Do 3 sets of 10 reps

3. Calves: Ankle pumps (This exercise is done to prevent clots from forming in the lower leg (depending on our surgery; you may be non-weight-bearing after surgery))

Try keeping the knee straight, pull the toes toward the head then point them away

Repeat at a moderate pace

Repeat on opposite side

Do 3 sets of 10 reps



- 4. Triceps: Push downs** (This exercise is to strengthen the triceps for the use of crutches if you are non-weight-bearing)

Lean against a bench or a table

Keep your elbows close to your body and push away and straighten the arms and squeeze the triceps and lower the body down toward the table

Do 3 sets of 10 reps

- 5. Cardiovascular health** strengthening is **strongly** recommended pre-operatively. 30 minutes of routine walking at a brisk pace, biking or trail walking is recommended 3-4 times per week up until your surgical day. IF you cannot perform a brisk walk due to your foot or ankle pain, please consider an activity such as biking or swimming.

Post-op Strengthening Exercises

While recovering from foot and ankle surgery, it is paramount to continue to stay healthy and as active as possible without injuring your operative limb. Your operative limb will most likely be in a below knee soft cast or splint, or you will be in a post-operative boot. Here are a few things to consider:

1. Stretching

Stretching your muscles (other than those below the knee on the operated extremity) is a good activity to do and can often be started immediately after surgery. Care is required to ensure that you are not loading the operated extremity (if you are supposed to be non-weight-bearing) and that you keep the operated foot elevated.

2. Core Strengthening: Dead Bug

Lie on your back with your arms extended straight up towards the ceiling, and your legs raised with your knees bent at 90°. Lower your right arm and left leg at the same time until they are hovering just above the floor, then return to the starting position. Then do the same with the opposite limbs.

3. Hip and Knee Flexion and Extensions

Perform at least 5 times per day, 10 reps for each limb. This will assist with active recovery when you are going to begin formal physical therapy and weightbearing.

Here are more resources:

<https://www.prehabexercises.com/ankle-activation/>

<https://theprehabguys.com/foot-ankle-prehab-program/#sh-choose-plans>

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