

## Total ankle replacement surgery

This information has been produced to help you understand about treatment options available for severe ankle arthritis and benefits and risks involved. It includes the following information:

- Key points
- Benefits and risks of ankle replacement surgery
- Who surgery is recommended for?
- What happens after surgery?
- What you can expect following ankle replacement surgery
- Alternative treatment
- Success rates of ankle replacement

### Key points

- Ankle replacement is an operation to remove the parts of the ankle severely affected by arthritis and replace them with an artificial joint made of metal and plastic.
- The purpose of the operation is to reduce pain and improve function.

### What are the benefits and risks of this operation?

#### Benefits:

- Pain relief.
- Preservation of joint movement.

#### Risks

- Infection – 2 to 4 cases in every 100.
- Damage to nerves and blood vessels – very rare
- Blood clots in legs (deep vein thrombosis – DVT) and lungs (pulmonary embolism – PE) – 2 to 3 cases in every 100.
- Fracture of the bones at the ankle joint – rare
- Loosening of the ankle joint – about 10 cases in every 100 in 10 years time.
- Failed ankle replacement surgery may need further joint replacement surgery or surgery to fuse the bones at the joint with bone grafting (growing bone tissue is taken from other parts of your body and transplanted to your ankle).

### When is ankle replacement surgery not recommended?

Not everyone is suitable for an ankle replacement. We do not recommend an ankle replacement if you have any of the following:

- Infection
- Collapse of talus (ankle bone)
- Poor foot sensation
- Poor skin condition
- Poor blood circulation to the legs
- Severe deformity of ankle

### Who is suitable for ankle replacement?

Ankle replacement is generally recommended for patients over the age of 60. But it is offered to patients below the age of 60, depending on the cause of disease and presence of arthritis in surrounding joints.

### What happens after surgery?

- Pain – Can be moderate to severe to the scale to 8/10 for the first 2 days. You will be given adequate painkillers to control this.
- You will be in a leg plaster for 2 to 3 weeks
- Physiotherapy will start the following day – no weight bearing on the operated leg for 3 to 6 weeks
- Most patients will go home the following day with painkillers to take at home
- Follow up in outpatient clinics for 2 to 3 weeks to check the wound and remove the plaster
- You may need time off work for 6 weeks.
- You won't be able to drive until you can do an emergency stop without any pain in the foot.

### What can you expect following a successful ankle replacement?

- Improved function / mobility
- Less pain
- Easier to walk further without the need of a walking aid
- Return to no-impact / low-impact sports, such as walking, golf and swimming may be possible but strenuous sport, such as rugby or squash, is not recommended
- Keeping your current range of movement, but this is unlikely to get a lot better
- Full recovery may take up to twelve months.

## Alternative treatment to total ankle replacement

Ankle fusion is an alternative treatment for joint replacement. This is an operation that fuses the ends of the bones using screws and sometimes bone grafts. This operation will also give good pain relief but the disadvantages of ankle fusion are:

- Stiffness
- Prolonged recovery (you will be in plaster cast/boot for 3 to 4 months )
- Worsening arthritis in the surrounding joints
- Abnormal gait (walking with foot turned out)

## Success rates of surgery

Published results confirm that 97 out of every 100 replaced ankle joints are working very well after 3 years and 90 out of every 100 replaced ankle joints are working very well at 10 years.

## Where to get further information

For more information about the Trust visit our website [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

## Useful numbers and contacts

Adult Day Surgery Unit:	0118 322 7622
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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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