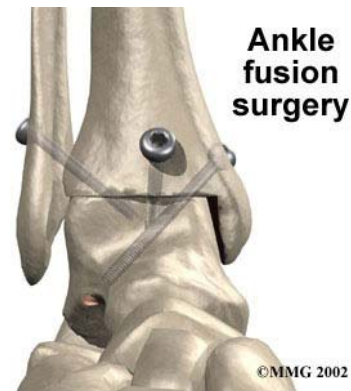


## Ankle Fusion

The ankle is a complex joint involving the tibia, fibula, and talus and numerous ligaments, all of which are designed to provide stability as you walk, run, jump, stand, etc. The ankle joint allows for the up and down movement, as well as slight side-to-side movement of the ankle. Degeneration of this joint is often the result of injury or arthritis. The result is pain with walking and at rest.

Ankle fusion surgery fuses the tibia with the talus. Much of the up-and-down motion of the back of the foot will be lost; however, the side-to-side rocking motion that comes from the subtalar joint will remain.



## Surgery

Two small incisions are made on the front of the ankle. The joint cartilage is removed from between the talus and the tibia. Screws or a metal rod will be placed to allow the bones to heal together in proper alignment. A tibial bone graft taken from your knee area will be used in conjunction with the screws and rod. In general, patients undergoing an ankle fusion are admitted to the hospital for one or two days following surgery.

## **Pre- and Post-operative**

The answers to many of your pre- and post-operative questions are in the pre-operative handout that was given to you. Please take a moment and read through it.

Your first post-operative appointment will be 10 – 14 days after surgery. At that time, the dressing and sutures will be removed; x-rays may be taken. A hard cast or removable walking boot will be applied and you will be in a non-weight bearing status for 6 weeks. At the next post-operative appointment, X-rays will be obtained, and you will be placed in another hard cast or a removable walking boot. Gradual weight bearing will then begin. You will be in this for another 6 weeks.

In some cases, a bone growth stimulator will be ordered to help the fusion “knit” together. You will be given more information during the first or second post-operative appointment if the stimulator is appropriate.

Three months following surgery, custom orthotics will be ordered. Be aware that swelling in your ankle may take up to one year to subside.

Dr. Cooper’s patients will be seen by the Nurse Practitioner for the first post-operative appointment and specific post-operative questions will be addressed at the second post-operative appointment.

### **Other resources**

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons ([www.orthoinfo.aaos.org](http://www.orthoinfo.aaos.org))  
National Institutes of Health ([www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov))  
[www.jointreplacement.com](http://www.jointreplacement.com)

**These are general guidelines only. Your individual course of treatment may vary.**