

Controlling Leg and Foot Swelling



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER

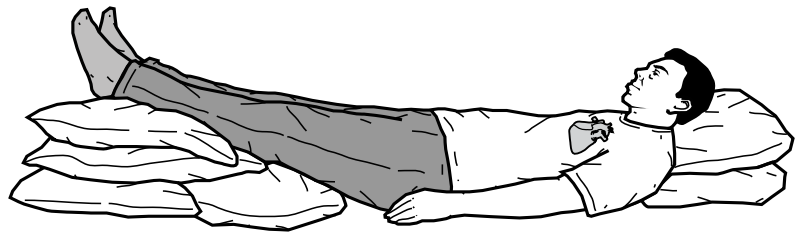
Leg and foot swelling may occur after an injury or after surgery. Too much swelling can cause more pain and slow recovery. It can also delay your surgery. Here are some things you can do to control leg and foot swelling.

Change your position often

- The first few days after your surgery, you will not be as active. Change your position every 30 minutes during the day for at least the first 3 weeks after your surgery, or as directed by your doctor.
- Do not sit or stand for long periods of time with your legs hanging down since that can increase swelling.

Elevate your feet

- Lay on your back 3 to 4 times each day for about 45 to 60 minutes with your feet and legs higher than your heart. This lets gravity help ease swelling.
 - Use 2 to 3 pillows under your lower legs and ankles for support. **Do not** place pillows only under your knees.
 - If you have a splint on, do not put any pressure on your heel.
- **Do not use a chair recliner or rest your feet on a stool or ottoman for 6 weeks** after the injury or surgery. These do not raise your feet higher than your heart.



Other ways to prevent swelling

Compression Stockings

- Wear compression or support stockings if prescribed. There are different compression pressures for stockings. Use the pressure level ordered by your provider.
- Most often the stockings are to be worn for 2 to 3 weeks after surgery.
- These stockings should be put on in the morning before getting out of bed and taken off at bedtime.
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Ice Packs

- Use ice packs as directed.
- Be sure to always have a layer of cloth between the ice pack and your skin to prevent injury to the skin.
- Most ice packs can be used for 15 to 30 minutes every hour.
- Ice packs are often good to use after exercise.

Exercise as Directed

- Do the exercises ordered by your doctor or therapist. Exercises like ankle pumps, gluteal sets and quad sets can be done in bed, in a chair or when you are standing.
- Most often these exercises are done every hour when you are awake for 2 to 3 weeks after surgery to increase the circulation in your legs.
- Walk often during the day to work the muscles in your legs to help ease swelling.



Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu**.