Leg and Foot Swelling

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 the leg swelling.

Change your position often

- The first few days after your surgery, you will not be as active. Your leg muscles weaken and do not help as much to pump your blood back to your heart.
- Change your position every 30 minutes during the day for the first 3 weeks after your surgery.
- 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 elevated above your heart. Use 2 to 3 pillows under your lower legs and ankles for support. Do not place pillows under your knees. If you have a splint on, keep your heel free from any pressure.
• **Do not use a stool or chair recliner for 6 weeks** after the injury or surgery. These will not raise your feet higher than your heart to let gravity help ease swelling.

**Other ways to prevent swelling**

- Wear compression or support stockings if prescribed. These stockings should be put on in the morning when you first get up and taken off at bedtime. Most often the stockings are to be worn for 2-3 weeks after surgery.

- Use ice packs as you are 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 15-30 minutes every hour. Ice packs are often good to use after exercise.

- Do the exercises your doctor or therapist ordered. 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 your surgery to increase the circulation in your legs.

- Walk often during the day to work the muscles in your legs to help ease swelling.

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Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.