

# NO PAIN..... MORE Gain with Ankle Replacement



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## What is Arthritis of the Ankle?

Over the years, the smooth, gliding surface covering the ends of bones (cartilage) becomes worn and frayed. As the cartilage deteriorates and gets thinner, the bones lose their protective covering and eventually may rub together, resulting in inflammation, swelling, and pain in the joint.

Injuries throughout a lifetime contribute to the development of arthritis of the ankle. Any ankle strain, sprain, or fracture are potential precursors to arthritis, even if the injuries occurred years before the signs of arthritis emerged. Ankle injuries can directly harm the cartilage and the mechanics of the joint.

Arthritis progresses slowly and the pain and stiffness it causes worsens over time.

## What can I do if I have Arthritis?

Nonsurgical treatment options include:

- ♦ Pain relievers and anti-inflammatory medications to reduce swelling
- ♦ Shoe inserts (orthotics), such as pads or arch supports
- ♦ Custom-made shoe, such as a stiff-soled shoe with a rocker bottom
- ♦ An ankle-foot orthosis (AFO)
- ♦ A brace or a cane
- ♦ Physical therapy and exercises
- ♦ Weight control or nutritional supplements
- ♦ Medications, such as a steroid medication injected into the joint

If arthritis does not respond to nonsurgical treatment, surgery should be considered as an option. The choice of surgery will depend on the type of arthritis, the impact of the disease on the joints, and the location of the arthritis.

## What is Ankle Replacement Surgery?

The goal of surgery is to decrease pain and improve function. In a total ankle replacement, an artificial implant (prosthesis) replaces the damaged ankle joint.

Although not as common as a total hip or knee joint replacement, advances in implant design have made ankle replacement a feasible option for many people. In addition to providing pain relief from arthritis, ankle replacements offer patients better mobility and movement compared to an ankle fusion. By allowing motion at the formerly arthritic joint, less stress is transferred to the adjacent joints. Less stress reduces the occurrence of adjacent joint arthritis.

## How Does an Artificial Ankle Work?

An artificial ankle is an alternative to traditional ankle fusion surgery. In fusion surgery, the ankle joint is removed allowing the tibia (shinbone) to grow together or fuse with the talus bone (the first large bone of the

foot). Ankle fusion results in loss of up and down movement of the foot. An artificial ankle preserves the joint's natural movement.

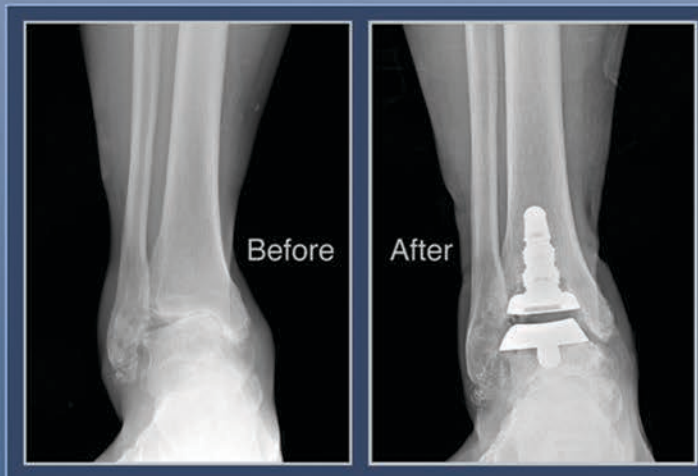
In ankle replacement surgery, both sides of the ankle joint are removed and replaced with specially designed components, called prostheses. An ankle prosthesis has two parts: a tibial component that replaces the ankle socket (the top portion), and the talus component that replaces the top of the talus (the first bone of the foot that sits in the ankle socket).

## Is an Ankle Replacement Right for Me?

Ankle replacement is recommended for patients with:

- ♦ Advanced arthritis of the ankle
- ♦ Limited ankle and foot motion
- ♦ Ankle pain that interferes with daily activities

The ideal patient for ankle replacement surgery is a non-smoker over 50 years old, of normal weight, moderately active, and in otherwise good health. Medical problems such as diabetes, heart disease, lung problems, nerve conditions, and poor blood circulation increase the risk of complications. The quality of the ankle bones must be good to support the implant or the implant may fail. Ultimately, your orthopedic surgeon will consult with you to evaluate all of these factors, and to decide whether you are a good candidate for ankle replacement.



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