

# Removal of Foot & Ankle Metalwork

## INTRODUCTION

Patients often need screws, plates, nails or wires removed after a period of time to improve function or reduce irritation or pain. Hardware removal involves exposing the hardware to be removed (usually through previous scars) and repairing the surrounding tissues.

## THE SURGERY

Removal of metalwork involves a number of steps:

- General anaesthetic and IV antibiotics
- Tourniquet around the thigh
- Incision/s over the metalwork
- Removal of metalwork with appropriate equipment
- Repair of surrounding structures as required
- Closure of incisions with sutures
- Local anaesthetic block
- Surgical shoe

## GUIDELINES FOR POST-OP RECOVERY

### HOSPITAL ADMISSION

- Most patients go home on the day of surgery

### FIRST 2 WEEKS

- Elevate foot and rest
- Full weightbearing as tolerated in surgical shoe
- Crutches for balance and support if required
- Gentle active range of movement exercises of ankle and toes
- Dressings to stay dry and intact
- Strong painkillers as required
- Vitamin C 1g per day

### 2 WEEK POST-OP APPOINTMENT

- Review by Dr Zilko and nurse for removal of dressings and sutures

### WEEKS 3-6

- Transition to normal supportive shoes
- Daily scar massage from 3 weeks post-op
- Safe for exercise bicycle/elliptical trainer as tolerated
- Avoid impact exercises (eg running, jumping, skipping) to minimise risk of fracture through a screw hole
- Physiotherapy may be required for strength, conditioning and sport-specific training

### FROM 6 WEEKS

- Return to most activities, including impact exercises

Full recovery is usually within 3 months.

*Every patient's recovery is individual and depends on the severity of the injury/disease and complexity of the surgery.*