

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

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.