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# OS14lite Ankle Arthrodesis

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This document will give you information about ankle arthrodesis. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### What is arthritis?

Arthritis is a group of conditions that cause damage to one or more joints.

The most common type of arthritis is osteoarthritis, where there is gradual wear and tear of a joint. In a few cases this is the result of a previous injury. Some other types of arthritis are associated with inflammation of the joints.

Arthritis eventually wears away the normal cartilage covering the surface of the joint and the bone underneath becomes damaged. This causes pain and stiffness in the joint.

### What are the benefits of surgery?

If your ankle arthrodesis is successful, you should have less pain and be able to walk more easily.

### Are there any alternatives to ankle arthrodesis?

Simple painkillers such as paracetamol and anti-inflammatory painkillers such as ibuprofen can help control the pain of arthritis. Supplements to your diet may also help relieve your symptoms. You should check with your doctor before you take supplements.

Using a walking stick can make walking easier. A plastic splint or a stiff ankle boot with a cushioned heel is sometimes helpful. A steroid injection into your ankle joint can sometimes reduce pain and stiffness.

A keyhole operation (arthroscopy) to clean out the ankle joint can give some relief for six to twelve months.

All these measures become less effective if your arthritis gets worse.

Some people with ankle arthritis can have an ankle replacement.

### What does the operation involve?

A variety of anaesthetic techniques is possible. The operation usually takes between an hour and an hour and a half.

Your surgeon will remove the damaged joint surfaces. They will then fix the bones together with a metal plate, a metal rod, or screws (see figure 1).

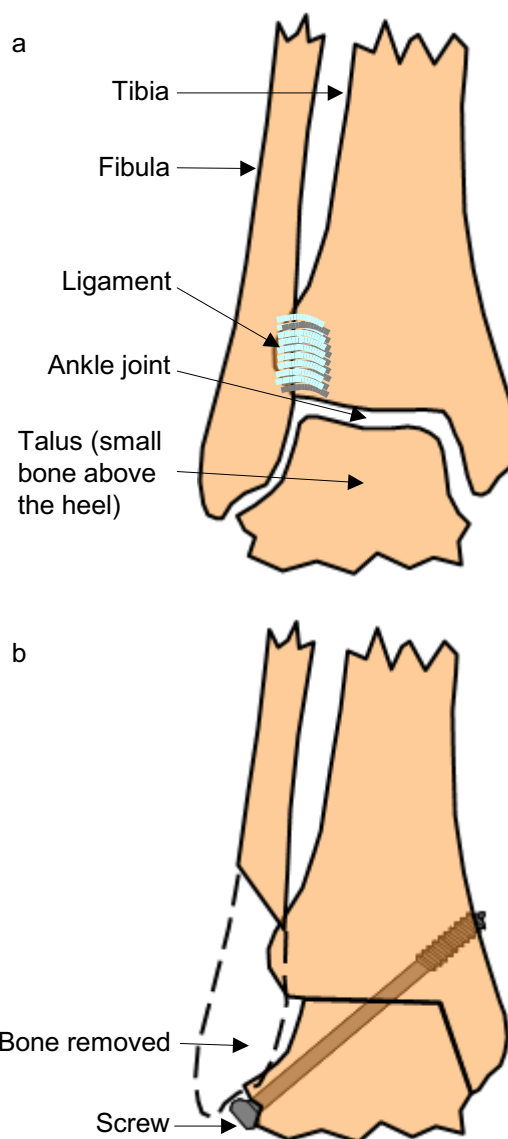


Figure 1

a A normal ankle

b An ankle arthrodesis

### What complications can happen?

#### 1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine

#### 2 Specific complications

- Damage to nerves

- Infection in the ankle
- Failure of the arthrodesis
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of the foot and ankle (complex regional pain syndrome)

### **How soon will I recover?**

You should be able to go home after one to three days.

To start with, you should spend most of the time with your leg raised on a chair or footstool. Most people need to have the plaster cast for about twelve weeks. You will need to use crutches or sticks until it is removed.

Once the plaster cast is removed, regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery, have less pain, and can move about better.

### **Summary**

If you have severe arthritis in your ankle, an ankle arthrodesis should reduce your pain and allow you to do more of your normal activities.

### **Acknowledgements**

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**This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.**