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# Discharge Instructions: Internal Fixation of a Fractured Femur

You had a procedure called internal fixation of a fractured femur (thighbone). A rod, plates and screws, or several pins were inserted inside the bone. These will hold the broken ends of bone in place while they heal. Once the bone has healed, the rod, plate and screws, or pins may need to be removed with surgery. A broken femur is a serious injury that takes about 3 to 6 months to heal. Here are instructions to help you care for your leg when you are at home.

## Activity

- Arrange your household to keep the items you need within reach.
- Remove electrical cords, throw rugs, and anything else that may cause you to fall.
- Use nonslip bath mats, grab bars, a raised toilet seat, and a shower chair in your bathroom.
- Follow the weight-bearing instructions given by your healthcare provider. They will tell you how much weight you can or can't put on your leg.
- Use a cane, crutches, a walker, or handrails. Use these until your balance, flexibility, and strength improve. Ask for help from others when you need it.
- Don't carry things in your hands. You will need to use your hands to keep your balance. Use a fanny pack, apron, or pockets to carry things.
- Don't sit or lie in the same position for long periods. Don't cross your legs when you sit or lie down. Carefully reposition yourself every 30 to 60 minutes.
- Don't drive until your healthcare provider says it's OK. And never drive while taking opioid pain medicine.

## Home care

- Take your pain medicine exactly as directed.
- Take extra care when showering. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions closely. Do the following:
  - If you wear a leg brace or immobilizer, cover it with plastic to keep it dry while you shower.
  - If you don't wear a leg brace or immobilizer, carefully wash your incision with soap and water. Gently pat it dry. Don't rub the incision or apply creams or lotions to it. To prevent falling while showering, sit on a shower chair.
- Tell all your healthcare providers—including your dentist—that you have a rod, plate and screws, or pin in your leg. You may need to take antibiotics before dental work and other medical procedures. This is to reduce the risk of infection.

## Follow-up care

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Follow up with your healthcare provider as advised.

## **Call 911**

Call 911 right away if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath

## **When to call your healthcare provider**

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Numbness or tingling in your leg or toes
- Cool, pale, red- or blue-colored leg or toes
- Fever of 100.4° F ( 38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Shaking chills
- Pain that gets worse
- Swelling of the fracture site or calf
- Fluid with foul odor coming from the dressing
- A rash