

Foot And Ankle Surgery

Pinsite Care for External Fixation

The Orthopedic Institute



Of North Texas, P.A.

"The Pursuit of Orthopedic Excellence"

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WHAT IS EXTERNAL FIXATION?

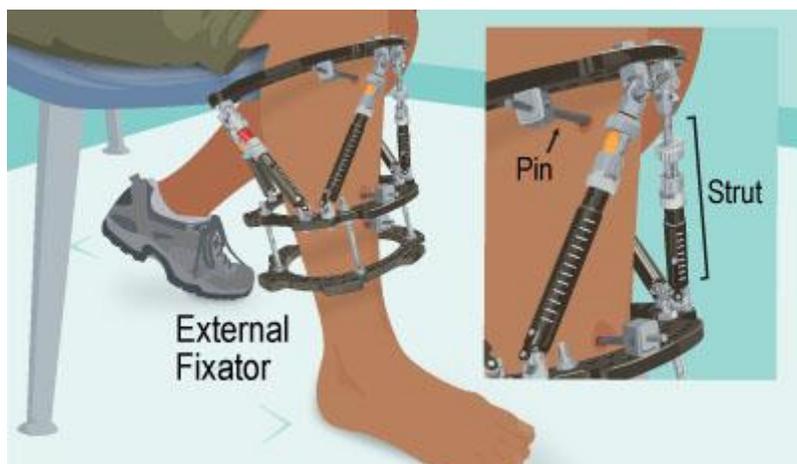
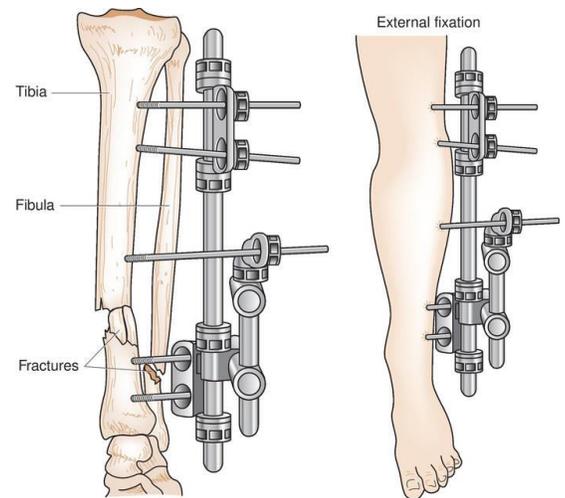
When a bone needs medical attention to correct a deformity or treat a fracture, there are different treatment options a doctor will consider. Proper care of a broken bone or a fusion should relieve pain and help ensure that healing occurs correctly.

Your surgeon has assessed your treatment needs and has decided that external fixation is the best treatment for you.

External fixation, just as the name suggests, is a device worn outside the body. This device, which is called a fixator, is connected to the bone with bone screws (commonly called pins). The pins pass through the skin and sometimes muscles, to connect the external fixator to the bone.

Two or more pins are placed on either side of the broken bone to hold the bone in place and to anchor the fixator securely. Sometimes wires are used with pins or instead of pins to secure the bone pieces.

Your surgeon will use the external fixator to place the leg in its correct position and alignment until bone healing has occurred. This may take anywhere from six weeks to three months or longer depending on the complexity of the procedure.





WHY IS THE PINSITE IMPORTANT?

The area where the pin meets the skin is called the pin site. This opening, like any cut or nick in the skin, must be kept clean or there will be a risk of infection.

Infection could cause the pin to loosen or require its removal. Using external fixation as a treatment to heal your fracture may help you return to you normal activities more quickly, but it is essential that you care for your pin sites correctly to help prevent infection and allow more comfortable healing.

YOU WILL BE ADVISED AT YOUR FIRST OFFICE VISIT ON HOW TO CLEAN YOUR PINSITES.

During your office visit, the staff will teach you and show you how to clean your pinsites. You will demonstrate how to care for your pinsites as you will need to do pinsite care on your own at home two times each day. This can take a little getting used to but the staff will be there to teach and reassure you in learning how to care for your pinsites.

This brochure explains much of what is involved, and the importance of taking an active role in your treatment. It also provides you with a reminder of important steps in pinsite care.

HOWEVER, THESE CAN ONLY BE GENERAL GUIDELINES, YOU SHOULD ALWAYS FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF YOUR SURGEON.



CARE AND CLEANING: SUPPLIES



SUPPLIES

The supplies needed for caring for your external fixator can be found at any pharmacy or ordered online from an online pharmacy or even Amazon.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- »» Normal Saline
- »» Hydrogen Peroxide
- »» Disposable Cups to Hold Cleansing Solution
- »» Sterile Gauze Dressing: 2" x 2" (5cm x 5cm) and 4" x 4" (10cm x 10cm)
- »» Sterile Cotton Swabs
- »» Bag for Waste Disposal
- »» Examination Gloves

CARE AND CLEANING: DIRECTIONS



FREQUENCY

Pin site care should be performed twice a day. Once in the morning and once again before going to sleep. It is important to take care of your pinsites in order to avoid an infection.

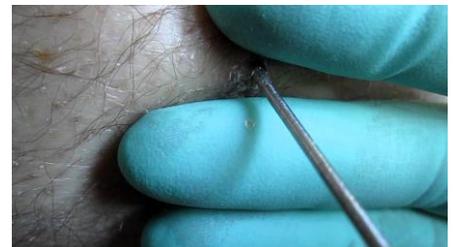
STEPS

Step 1: Prepare the cleaning supplies

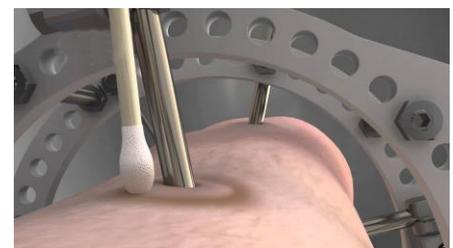
Step 2: Wash your hands thoroughly, including between fingers and the back of each hand. Only use soap that is reserved for you and clean paper towels. Don't touch anything else before starting the cleaning procedure such as your wheel chair or crutches. If you have to remove dressings from the pin sites, wash your hands again, and when you finish your cleaning wash them a final time. Hand washing is the single most important factor in preventing infection. Use a clean paper towel to dry your hands and dispose of it after use. Next put on the gloves.



Step 3: Gently massage the skin around the pins with your finger tips to make sure that that skin is free to move slightly. This brings any drainage to the surface so that it may be cleaned away.



Step 4: Saturate a sterile cotton swab with the cleansing solution selected by your surgeon. Gently apply the solution directly to one pinsite at a time. Swab in a circular motion, always moving from the pin. Remove any crust which may have formed. Change cotton swabs as often as necessary. After all the drainage is removed, dry the pin site with a new cotton swab. Start with a new sterile cotton swab for each pin site.



CARE AND CLEANING: DIRECTIONS



Step 5: Clean the entire length of each pin with a 2" x 2" sterile gauze pad, using a new pad for each pin.

Step 6: Wrap sterile gauze loosely around the pinsite. If there are raw edges of gauze, roll them inside so that no loose filaments get into your pin sites. Placing your fingers over the gauze, gently press down on the skin around the pin site. After the first few days, when the pinsites are dry, gauze should not be used. Instead, the pin sites should be left uncovered and exposed to the air.



Step 7: You must also take care of your external fixator. The entire device should be cleaned using cleaning solution and 4" x 4" sterile gauze dressings. Please pay attention not to alter the different elements of the fixator. Detergents with chloride, iodide or bromide **MUST NOT** be used.

Step 8: Place all materials used for cleaning into a bag for disposal. At the end of each session, wash your hands.

In The Shower:

Your surgeon may allow you to shower with the external fixator once your sutures have been removed. While in the shower, gently clean your external fixator. Afterwards, dry the fixator thoroughly with a clean towel. Continue to clean your pin sites in the manner described above.





DO I HAVE AN INFECTION?

ANTIBIOTICS

In some cases, your doctor may prescribe you an antibiotic. Please stay on the antibiotic regardless of whether you think you need it or not. Antibiotics may reduce the rate of pinsite infections which may affect your ability to heal.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I HAVE AN INFECTION:

Even with excellent pinsite care, there is a chance that Pinsites may become infected or cause complications. It is possible that you might see one or more of the following:

- Redness at the pinsite
- Swelling at the pinsite
- Thick or colored discharge at the pinsite
- Loosening or movement of the pin
- Persistent pain or soreness at the pinsite

*****If you experience any of these signs or if you have doubts on the pinsite cleaning procedure, you should immediately contact your surgeon's office.**

