

Foot and Ankle Fractures and Broken Bones

What's the difference between a broken bone and a fractured bone? They are actually the same thing and both terms mean that the integrity of the bone has been compromised. This could mean a barely perceptible crack seen on an X-ray to a completely shattered ankle in multiple pieces.



Foot and Ankle fractures and broken bones are very common. These most often happen during normal daily activities like descending stairs while carrying a load of laundry or walking the dog. Slippery surfaces such as wet grass, damp wood or an icy driveway are also common culprits. High-impact sporting activities such as soccer, basketball and football also result in foot and ankle fractures and broken bones. More serious injuries occur during motor vehicle crashes and falls off ladders and roofs.

If you have injured your foot or ankle, you likely will experience immediate pain and swelling. Bruising will be present depending on the severity of your injury. You may walk with a limp or not be able to put any pressure at all down on your foot and ankle. Your foot and ankle may be tender to touch. If you have any of these signs, you may have a foot and ankle fracture or broken bone.

Dr. Buchanan has extensive experience treating foot and ankle fractures and broken bones. Due to the complexity of the anatomy in the foot and ankle, fractures are easily missed. If you had X-rays initially taken in the Emergency Room or Urgent Care, the technique may have been limited due to your pain and swelling. The quality and technique of your X-rays is very important in properly diagnosing the extent of your foot and ankle injury. Dr. Buchanan frequently repeats X-rays using advanced imaging techniques to avoid missing foot and ankle fractures. Buchanan may order an MRI or CT scan to assess details not evaluated with traditional X-rays.

Most foot and ankle fractures and broken bones can be treated without surgery. Treatment begins by following the "RICE" protocol: Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. Rest simply means staying off your foot/ankle but may include the use of protective shoes, braces and/or boots. Icing begins with a Ziploc bag of crushed ice or a freezer Gel pad wrapped around your injured foot/ankle. More severe injuries may require the use of a "cold machine" which uses an electrical pump to circulate cold water through a specialized foot/ankle boot. These cold machines are available at Dr. Buchanan's office and are helpful throughout your entire recovery. Compression is obtained with ace wraps or compression socks. Elevation requires that you raise your "toes to your nose" or "ankle to the level of your heart". Anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDS) and/or Tylenol may help calm your pain level over the first few days.

Dr. Buchanan also has several "secret weapons" to speed bone healing. Ask him for a copy of his "Nutrition for Bone Healing" handout!

Although most of the foot and ankle fractures and broken bones can be successfully treated without surgery, a small subset of these injuries requires surgery. If surgery is indicated, Dr. Buchanan has extensive experience in using Minimally invasive surgical techniques which use small incisions and result in less complications and decreased pain.

With or without surgery, Dr. Buchanan's goal is to help you get back on your feet as soon as possible. He uses accelerated rehabilitation programs utilizing immediate weight bearing and removable walking boots when possible.

Call today at (703) 525-2200 to schedule an appointment with Dr. Buchanan to discuss treatment options for your foot and ankle fracture and broken bone.