

Pilon Fracture of the Ankle

Pilon fractures will affect the bottom part of the shinbone that connects to the ankle joint. In the majority of cases, both of the bones in the lower part of the leg end up being broken close to the ankle. In many of the pilon fractures, the bones of the ankle joint end up being crushed due to a tremendous impact causing the injury. These fractures are often considered to be a high-energy ankle fracture. Due to the amount of energy needed to cause this fracture, roughly 25 to 50 percent of all those with the injury are going to have additional injuries requiring treatment.

Pilon Fracture of the Ankle Anatomy

Three different bones compose the ankle joint: the shinbone (tibia), the smaller bone within the lower leg (fibula) and the small bone nestled between the heel bone and the fibula and the tibia (talus). Doctors will often classify the fracture based upon the area where the break occurred. Two joints are often involved when a fracture occurs: the ankle joint, which is where the talus, fibula and the tibia meet, and the syndesmosis joint, which is between the fibula and the tibia and held together with ligaments. It takes multiple ligaments to ensure the ankle joint is stable.

How to Treat a Pilon Fracture of the Ankle:

1. Casts and Splints

In the majority of cases, the doctor will begin by applying a splint to help keep the ankle in place. After the swelling has gone down, they will replace the splint using a short leg cast. To help maximize support, the cast needs to fit the ankle correctly. As the swelling in the ankle changes, you might need to have frequent cast changes to accommodate your ankle.

2. Monitoring

The doctor will monitor the healing of the fracture closely. You will be required to return to the clinic regularly to have repeat x-rays done and make sure the ankle is stable throughout the healing process.

3. Recovery

More than likely, you aren't going to be able to place a great deal of weight on the ankle for up to 12 weeks following the injury. After about six weeks, the doctor will replace the cast with a removable brace. This brace will provide you with continual protection while your ankle continues healing.

4. Rehabilitation

Rehab is crucial following a pilon fracture. The injury is complicated and requires expert medical care to manage the rehabilitation to ensure return to sport.

Tips:

- On average, individuals who end up with pilon fractures are between the ages of 35 and 40. They tend to be quite rare in children or elderly individuals. As the population continues to age, seniors are going to account for a far greater amount of these fractures than they do currently.
- Men are three times as likely to have a pilon fracture over their female counterparts.
- Even though airbags can help to save your life in an automobile accident, they don't protect your legs, which is where pilon fractures can occur.
- Falling from an elevated height can leave you prone to one of these fractures.
- When skiing, your legs and ankles are susceptible to injuries. Try to exercise caution when skiing down the hills at excessive speeds.