



6300 N. River Road, Suite 510 • Rosemont, IL 60018

phone 800-235-4855 or 847-698-4654 (outside the U.S.) • fax 847-692-3315 • www.aofas.org

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STUDY FINDS: RETURN TO LIGHT RECREATIONAL ACTIVITY POSSIBLE FOR PATIENTS UNDERGOING ANKLE REPLACEMENT SURGERY

New study reveals significant improvement in quality of life with total ankle arthroplasty

ROSEMONT, IL, Oct. 30, --Total ankle arthroplasty (ankle replacement), significantly improves quality of life making a return to light recreational activity and non-impact sports possible, according to a recent study published in the October issue of *Foot & Ankle International (FAI)*, the official scientific journal of The American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS).

“The return to sporting activities after total ankle arthroplasty has rarely been evaluated. The goal of this study was to evaluate ankle function and sports participation among patients with total ankle prosthesis,” states Mark Casillas, MD, an AOFAS member and co-author of the study.

The study reflects the outcomes of 140 patients who were operated on between 1997 and 2005. All received a single type implant and the procedures were all performed by Dr. Michel P. Bonnin in France. The post-operative study measured three aspects of ankle function: 1) overall perception of the ankle (normal, nearly normal, abnormal), 2) ankle performance during activities of daily life, and 3) ankle performance during sports and recreational activity.

Four and a half years following surgical implant, more than 75% of the patients participating in the study considered their ankles normal or nearly normal with less than 25% considering their ankle abnormal or highly abnormal. Forty-nine percent of the patients presented no discomfort in their daily activity but experienced discomfort in sports and recreation, 31.4% indicated no limitation related to their ankle in any situation and 17% were limited in their daily activities related to their ankle.

Although most often study patients who participated in sports indicated discomfort or slight pain in their ankle, the percentage of patients who indicated that taking part in the following sporting activities was totally painless include:

- 86% for swimming
- 84% for outdoor cycling
- 62% for gymnastics
- 53 % for downhill skiing
- 37% for hiking and cross-country skiing
- 34% for gardening
- 29% for dancing

New generation prostheses have resulted in renewed interest in total ankle arthroplasty. Total ankle arthroplasty has its advantages, disadvantages and the procedure is not without risk. The co-authors note that the decision to choose between arthrodesis (ankle fusion) and total ankle arthroplasty is often difficult to make. Among the many decision making factors between the two options, two are particularly important, the prosthesis lifespan and the functional results after implantation.

The authors further note that having reasonable expectations of the functional outcomes following total ankle arthroplasty is critical to the success of the procedure. While the study shows improvement in ankle function, the authors note that impact sports or strenuous activities are rarely possible after total ankle arthroplasty. Dr. Casillas advises, "Although participation in sporting activity produced no adverse effects in this study, it is likely that impact sports may increase the risk of arthroplasty failure."

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About The AOFAS

The AOFAS promotes quality, ethical and cost-effective patient care through education, research and training of orthopaedic surgeons and other health care providers. It creates public awareness for the prevention and treatment of foot and ankle disorders, provides leadership, and serves as a resource for government, industry and the national and international health care community.

About Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Surgeons

Orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeons are medical doctors (MD and DO) who specialize in the diagnosis, care, and treatment of patients with disorders of the musculoskeletal system of the foot and ankle. This includes the bones, joints, ligaments, muscles tendons, nerves, and skin. Orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeons use medical, physical, and rehabilitative methods as well as surgery to treat patients of all ages. They perform reconstructive procedures, treat sports injuries, and manage and treat trauma of the foot and ankle.

Orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeons work with physicians of many other specialties, including internal medicine, pediatrics, vascular surgery, endocrinology, radiology, anesthesiology, and others. Medical school curriculum and post-graduate training provides the solid clinical background necessary to recognize medical problems, admit patients to a hospital when necessary, and contribute significantly to the coordination of care appropriate for each patient.