



Dr
**CHRISTOFF
MARAIS**

MBChB (Stell), FC Ortho, MMed (UCT)

Orthopaedic Surgeon
Foot & Ankle Specialist

Practice No: 0766569
HPCSA No: MP0635804
Tel: 021 2051840 / 0639849334
Email: dr.christoffmarais@gmail.com

Ankle Fusion (Arthrodesis)

This is an operation to "fuse" or stiffen the ankle joint by joining the bones in the ankle.

Why is it performed?

Ankle fusions are performed for two main reasons:

- Ankle arthritis, either due to osteoarthritis or due to rheumatoid arthritis.
- Severe deformity or instability of the ankle joint.

Though some patient may be offered the option of an ankle replacement. It is not an option for all patients especially are if:

- You are young (usually under 50) or highly active.
- You have a severe foot deformity.
- Your ankle is very unstable.
- You have had infection in the ankle or the bones around it.
- The bone under the ankle (the talus) has collapsed.

Here, an ankle fusion would be advised.

If you have a severe foot deformity, you may be advised to have this corrected at the same time as your ankle fusion by fusing other joints in the foot. This would be discussed at the same time as your ankle fusion.

What is involved?

Ankle fusion is often done using arthroscopic techniques. This involves the use of a fiberoptic camera and specialized instrument through 2 small incision to remove



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the joint surfaces and allowing the two bones to heal together. The bones are held securely by two screws inserted from the inner aspect of the leg just above the ankle joint, to allow the bone to unite in the correct position.

For those with a tight Achilles tendon or weak muscle, or both, the Achilles tendon may also be lengthened during this surgery by making three small cuts in the calf and stretching the tendon.

For more information on what to expect after surgery, please speak to your surgeon for more detailed information.