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Ankle Replacement

Ankle replacement is an operation to replace an arthritic ankle joint.

Why would it be performed?

Ankle replacement surgery is done to treat ankle arthritis which causes pain in the ankle that cannot be controlled by simple measures such as pain medication physiotherapy or a walking aid.

Osteoarthritis of the ankle is when the cartilage of the joint is worn out and is most often because of a previous injury, but it can also happen spontaneously.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a generalized inflammatory condition that can affect many joints including the ankle and can cause ankle pain due to damage to the cartilage.

Ankle replacements are not for every patient and there are certain circumstances when it would not be advised because of a high failure rate.

It would not be suitable if:

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

In these situations, an ankle fusion surgery would be advised instead.

What does it involve?

An ankle replacement is performed through an incision over the front of the ankle. The worn-out joint surfaces are cut away and replaced with 2 metal pieces with a plastic part between them that allows the joint to move freely.



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In some cases, Achilles tendon lengthening surgery may be done as well, to allow full movement of the ankle joint. This will mean another three, exceedingly small incisions will be made, at the back of the ankle.

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