

Sue's List of Patient Tips

Perspective: Sue underwent ankle distraction and wore a circular fixator for 3 months.

You will want to have a shower chair or bench. They're available from Bed Bath & Beyond, Target or other stores for \$35 - \$150 (the \$35 one worked great for me). Many communities have a loan closet where you can borrow one (for FREE) for as long as you need it. I would also recommend installing a hand-held showerhead if you don't already have one. It makes it easier to work from a seated position.

Athletic pants that snap up the sides (called tearaway pants) worked wonderfully. They are available on-line from East Bay (www.eastbay.com) for \$25 - \$65 (but you may find them on sale for less than \$20). You can leave the sides unsnapped around your fixator. They're especially easy to remove as you don't have to pull the fixator through them, just unsnap the sides.

Crutch Pouch – As you will be dependent on crutches for quite a while, a crutch pouch is invaluable – it will allow you to carry things yourself. The Crutcheze Crutch bag by Crutcheze (about \$25) worked well and the Crutch Carry Bag by EZ-Access (about \$20) worked well but needed a couple zip-ties to keep it from slipping down the crutch.

Especially for coffee-drinkers, but useful for anyone - get a good spill-proof cup. If it doesn't have a handle, it fits nicely into the crutch pouches described above. It sounds silly, but having this daily bit of independence is mentally important.

While you're on crutches, take up any throw-rugs around your house, they can be hazardous. However, you should have slip-proof, rubber-backed rugs in any places where the floor gets wet and slippery like the bathroom.

Have at least 2 extra pillows available in the place(s) you will be sitting most. You'll want to elevate your leg as much as possible and it's hard to move them from place to place while you're on crutches.

Pin Care Supplies – how much to buy? For a standard Rozbruch Ankle Distractor, having 8 pins which are in 3 'clusters', every day you will need:

- 16 cotton tipped applicators (they come in pouches of 2 – so you'll need 8 pouches daily)
- ½ a roll of gauze (about 1.25 yards)
- 20 ml of saline
- 20 ml of Hydrogen peroxide
- One pair of gloves

So, if you have an ankle distractor for 3 months you can estimate (this is only an estimate, your fixator may be different and you may be in it for longer or shorter periods of time – ask the Dr. prior to your surgery):

- 8 pouches of applicators x 90 days = 720 pouches (they come in boxes of 100 pouches)
- ½ a roll of gauze x 90 days = 45 rolls of gauze
- 20 ml of saline x 90 days = 1800 ml of saline
- 20 ml of hydrogen peroxide x 90 days = 1800 ml of hydrogen peroxide

1 pair of gloves x 90 days = 90 pairs of gloves

If you are offered a home nurse service, accept it. If it is available in your area, your insurance may cover some visits. You may even be able to get a home physical therapist for some of the time. The nurse will come and check your vital signs and check for infection following your surgery. The physical therapist will help you with the exercises the doctor wants you to do and can also help you figure out the best way to get around in your house (stairs, bathroom, etc.).

You may have to take blood thinners after the fixator is put on – to prevent blood clots. Ask the Dr. beforehand if this is an issue – they may be taken by injection so if giving yourself injections is a problem, make arrangements to have someone you trust give them to you once a day.

Additional costs: Depending on your insurance, be aware there may be some additional costs:

Medical Clearance Doctor – sees you through the hospital (clears you for surgery, etc.). You will be required to meet with them for your pre-surgical testing. This, and in-hospital visits can be over \$500, depending on your insurance coverage.

Anesthesiologist – Check with your insurance to see if you have coverage for this while you are at the HSS. It's called a PAR – pathology, anesthesiology, radiology rider. Even so, the radiologist may visit you post-op in the hospital and charge you for this visit.

Co-payments – Each follow-up visit to Dr. Rozbruch will include X-rays which may require co-payments, depending on your insurance coverage.

Pin-care supplies – amounts are described above. Costs vary.

Medications – cost depends on your insurance coverage

Make arrangements to entertain yourself during the time you will be laid up: Join Netflix; make a reading list at your local library; get several crossword puzzle books, learn to knit, find interesting video or computer games ... whatever interests you. Being home-bound and unable to drive can be mentally challenging so prepare yourself in any way that suits you.

Don't be afraid to ask questions – call or e-mail the Dr.'s office, even if you think it's silly:

My silly questions: Can I shave my leg with the fixator on? Answer: It's not recommended.

Can I reuse the little plastic cups that the hospital gave me to mix the peroxide & saline for pin care?

Answer: Yes, just rinse them out and let them dry in between uses. This is great because they have the measurements on the side and a screw-top so it doesn't spill and they're hard to find in stores.