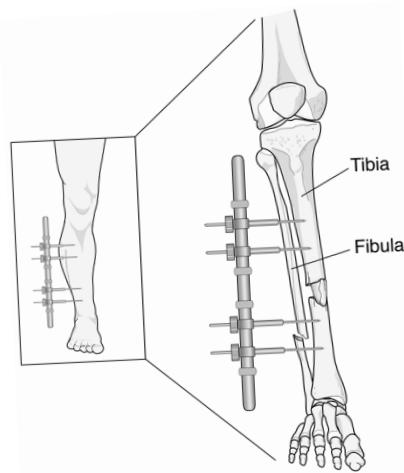


External Fixator

An external fixator is a device that may be used to keep fractured bones stable and in place. This is done by placing pins or screws into the bone on both sides of the fracture. The pins are then secured together outside the skin with clamps and rods. The device can be adjusted from the outside to make sure the bones remain in place during the healing process.



Placement of Fixator

There are times when it is not an option to fix a bone, like when the tissue around it or the skin has been injured. An external fixator is a short-term way to stabilize the bone while other tissues heal. The final repair of the bone can then be done with less risk of infection or any other problems. There is a risk of infection where the pins are inserted from the skin into the bone. You will need to keep the pin site clean to reduce risk of infection.

Removal of Fixator

The fixator will be removed when your provider decides you're ready for the final repair of the bone. This could be while you are still in the hospital or you may go home with the external fixator. You would then

come back to remove the fixator and for surgery to fix the bone.

Activity

Keep your limb elevated (above the level of your heart) as much as you can. This will help with swelling and pain.

Do not put any weight on the limb with the fixator when you move. When moving the limb with the fixator, hold the fixator bar. It is often more painful to hold the limb itself.

It's important to check your fixator daily.

Cleaning the Frame

Clean the frame about twice a week. Use a clean damp cloth or 4x4 gauze pad. The cloth can be dampened with alcohol or water. Then just wipe off the frame.

Cleaning the Pin Sites

You will need to clean the pin sites as ordered by your provider. Your nurse will tell you how to care for your pin site at home and will send you home with 3 days of supplies if needed.

Bathing

Never shower unless approved by your provider.

Supplies

You may be able to get more supplies on your return visits to the Orthopedic Clinic. If not, you will be told who to contact.

When to Call

- Loose pins
- Loose nuts on the frame
- Increased pain at the fracture site
- Questions or problems after going home
- If you need more supplies but do not have a scheduled clinic visit

Who to Call

Orthopedic Clinic
(608) 263-7540

After hours, nights, weekends, and holidays, call the paging operator at **608-262-0486**. Ask for the resident on call for your clinic. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2021. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7645.