ASK THE EXPERT

ANKLE EXPERT

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ABOUT THE EXPERT

Dr. Straus is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon. He completed his foot and ankle/sports fellowship at the Foundation for Orthopaedic, Athletic, and Reconstructive Research with Dr. Thomas O. Clanton in Houston. Dr. Straus continues to pursue the latest advancements in orthopedic technology, including ankle replacement and ligament reconstruction. Dr. Straus has been involved in the care of professional athletes with the Houston Rockets and Dallas Mavericks. He is fluent in Spanish and is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons and the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society.

Do all broken bones need medical treatment to heal?

Not all of them. Patients are often surprised when I tell them that their bone will heal without any significant intervention. Bones are pretty smart and release chemicals to start the healing process immediately after trauma.

What makes you choose treatments such as a cast or surgery?

For certain bones, we can tolerate some malalignment and still retain full function once it his healed. For other bones, only perfect anatomic alignment can be accepted. These are the ones that will require additional treatment.

Do you see problems with how fractures are treated at times?

I will occasionally see patients who were recommended surgery on fractures that I feel could heal without an operation.

Do you have any specific examples of this?

One that I see commonly is a fracture of the fifth metatarsal in the foot (the long bone 'behind' the pinky toe). This fracture occurs commonly in combination with a typical inversion ankle sprain mechanism. Ordinarily, the fracture involves a bump on the fifth metatarsal midway down the side of the foot, called the 'fifth metatarsal tuberosity'. The vast majority of these fractures heal very nicely with minimal immobilization. Often, simply the combination of a removable walking boot and stiff-soled orthopedic sandal will suffice. This method is appropriate for the vast majority of these fractures. In the less-common scenario of the fracture having very wide displacement, however, surgery may be discussed. Also, if the fracture occurs farther down the bone toward the toe (a Jones Fracture), surgery may be recommended as the blood supply in this area is poor.

Any other fractures that you see mistreated?

One other type of fracture involves the ankle. The two main bones of the lower leg are the tibia "shin-bone" and the fibula (smaller, thinner bone on the 'pinky-toe' side of the ankle). The protrusion at the bottom of the fibula is called the lateral malleolus. This bone is commonly broken with twisting injuries to the ankle. Similar to the fifth metatarsal, the majority of these fractures can be treated without surgery. Most require only a removable walking boot or even an ankle brace. A more severe subset of these fractures can be associated with tearing of the strong ligament on the inside (big toe side) of the ankle called the deltoid ligament. If this ligament is also torn, the ankle is unstable and a plate with screws is needed. This differentiation can be subtle, but an orthopedic surgeon can usually determine this by X-rays and physical exam.

How can I determine what type of fracture I have?

You are not required to remember all of this–there is no test at the end! The goal is for you to be informed and armed with information. You should be able to trust your doctor, but being knowledgeable and asking the right questions can keep you on track. As a doctor, the easy path is to treat fractures with long-term immobilization or surgical hardware. A knowledgeable doctor knows just the right amount of immobilization to heal the fracture without introducing unnecessary weakness and stiffness. A skilled surgeon knows when to operate and when to let nature take the reins.

REPAIRING YOUR ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

BRIAN STRAUS, M.D.

| Board Certified | Fellowship Trained |
| Orthopaedic Surgeon |

Dr. Brian Straus is fellowship-trained in all aspects of foot and ankle surgery including minimally invasive techniques, sports injuries, and reconstructive surgery. Dr. Straus has been caring for patients in the DFW area, including professional and recreational athletes, since 2007.

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