

Tibial Plateau Fracture Fixation — Pre-Operative Patient Guide

Colby Wollenman, M.D.

Tibial Plateau Fracture (Shin Bone Fracture at the Knee) — Open Reduction and Internal Fixation (ORIF)

Your Condition & Procedure

The condition

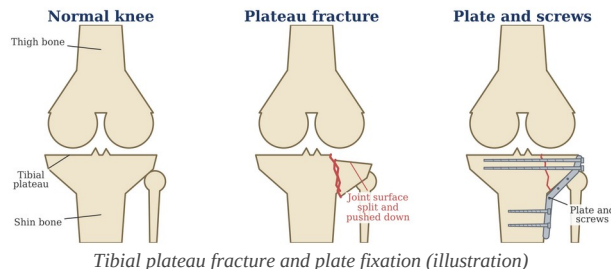
The **tibial plateau** is the flat top of the shin bone that forms the lower half of the knee joint. A fall, sports injury, or car crash can split or push down this joint surface. It causes pain, swelling, and trouble bearing weight; if it heals uneven, the knee can become unstable and arthritic.

The surgery

Through one or two incisions around the knee, the joint surface is lifted back into place and held with plates and/or screws; bone graft or bone substitute may fill gaps beneath it. A torn meniscus may also be repaired. If swelling is severe, surgery may wait until it settles. The final plan is determined during surgery.

Risks & benefits

Benefits: Restoring a smooth, level joint surface gives the best chance of a stable, well-functioning knee. **Risks** are uncommon and include infection, blood clots, knee stiffness, the joint surface settling or healing out of line, wound-healing problems, hardware irritation that may require removal, knee arthritis over time, injury to nearby structures (such as nerves, blood vessels, or cartilage), stiffness, persistent pain, dangerous swelling of the leg muscles (compartment syndrome; rare), and the need for further surgery. These will be reviewed with you in detail before surgery.



Before Surgery

- **Medications:** We will tell you what to stop and when (e.g., blood thinners, anti-inflammatories, some supplements, weight-loss injections).
- **Fasting:** Follow the instructions from your surgery coordinator/facility. In general, you should have nothing to eat or drink starting at midnight the night before surgery.
- **Nicotine:** Stop all nicotine products—they slow healing.
- **Equipment:** Crutches are typically arranged beforehand, sometimes with a hinged knee brace. Practice with crutches.
- **Physical therapy:** Schedule your first visit for within about a week after surgery.
- **Home:** Plan for a helper and remove trip hazards; a shower chair can help.
- **Medical history:** Let us know if you or anyone in your family has a history of blood clot disorders or a malignant hyperthermia reaction to anesthesia.
- **Health:** Call us if you develop a fever, illness, or skin problem near the knee.

Day of Surgery

- If instructed, take blood pressure/heart medications with a small sip of water.
- Arrive at the time given by your surgery coordinator.
- Bring your medication list, insurance card, photo ID, and crutches/brace if you have them.
- Wear loose clothing; leave jewelry and valuables at home.
- A responsible adult must drive you home. You may **not** drive yourself.

Immediately After Surgery

- You will recover in the recovery area; many patients go home the same day, and some stay overnight.
- Your surgeon will discuss the procedure with you and your support person.
- Your care team will review wound care, restrictions, medications, follow-up, and warning signs before discharge.

Milestone	What to Expect After Surgery (General Timeline)
Weight-bearing	Touch-down weight (foot flat, ~20 lb) with crutches for 6 weeks; some stable fractures allow earlier full weight bearing. After the 6-week x-rays, weight builds to full over 2 weeks.
Motion	Knee bending to 90° for 4 weeks, then as tolerated; full straightening is the top priority. No motion machine. Bike and pool from 6 weeks.
Daily life	Desk work often within 2–3 weeks. No driving while taking narcotic pain medication.
Running	Running and hopping typically between 4 and 6 months, once healed and strength reaches 80% of the other side.
Sports	Full release typically 5–6 months, after strength testing.
► Please note: This is a general guide only. Detailed post-operative instructions will be provided on the day of surgery, and your restrictions and timeline may change based on the findings and procedures performed.	

Learn More

We **strongly recommend** reading these pages from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (OrthoInfo) before your surgery:

- **Your condition: Fractures of the Proximal Tibia (Shinbone)** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/diseases--conditions/fractures-of-the-proximal-tibia-shinbone/>
- **Your procedure: Internal Fixation for Fractures** — <https://orthoinfo.org/en/treatment/internal-fixation-for-fractures/>

Questions before surgery? Call our office at (972) 378-1438. For a medical emergency, call 911.