

# Arthritic Ankle Surgery for Seniors

*I am not a young 62-year-old, if you know what I mean. But I'm still a little active. I don't run marathons, but I do like to golf and dance once in a while. The problem is I've got a bum ankle from arthritis. Am I too old for some kind of surgery for this problem?*

Ankle pain, decreased joint motion, and loss of function can be very disabling. Conservative care can help some individuals regain more normal joint action. If you have not had a rehab program of some kind, then that may be your first step to recovery.

But if painful and disabling symptoms persist after six months of rehab, then surgery may be advised. Ankle fusion is the most common operation for this type of problem. Joint motion is already limited by the pain and arthritic changes in the joint. By completely fusing the joint, the pain can be decreased or eliminated.

But if you want to preserve joint motion, then a *total ankle replacement* (TAR) may be right for you. TAR is a fairly new operation. Implant designs are still being changed and improved.

Patients receiving TARs tend to be young in general (younger than 65 years old). But this group of patients are still older than patients who have ankle fusions.

An orthopedic surgeon is the best one to advise you. A careful exam and assessment will guide the physician in planning the best plan of treatment for you.

S. L. Haddad, MD, et al. Intermediate and Long-Term Outcomes of Total Ankle Arthroplasty and Ankle Arthrodesis. In *The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery*. September 2007. Vol. 89-A. No. 9. Pp. 1899-1905.