

Patient Information Leaflet

Toe Fusion - Arthrodesis

Prepared by: Orthopaedic Department

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If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.

What is it?

Your toe is out of shape. You are about to have an operation to correct the deformity by fusing (stiffening) one, or both, of the toe joints in a straight position.

The Operation

Usually this operation is performed as a day case. You will have a general anaesthetic, and will be asleep for the whole operation. Your toe will be straightened. This is done by removing the joint of the toe. This is either called fusion of the toe, or arthrodesis. A cut is made over the top of your abnormal joint. The surfaces of the joint are then removed. The toe may be held in its correct position with a stout wire. This is known as a K-wire. This passes down from the end of the toe and across the joint to be fused. The skin is then closed up with stitches. After your operation, you will not be able to bend the toe joint.

Any Alternatives

Most people try pads from the chemist or the chiropodist before seeing an orthopaedic surgeon. If the pads have not helped, probably the best plan is to permanently straighten your toe.

Before the operation

Stop smoking and get your weight down if you are overweight. If you know that you have problems with your blood pressure, your heart, or your lungs, ask your family doctor to check that these are under control. Check the hospital's advice about taking the pill or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Check you have a relative or friend who can come with you to hospital, take you home, and help to look after you for the first week after the operation.

Bring all your tablets and medicines with you to hospital.

On the ward, you may be checked for past illnesses and may have special tests, ready for the operation. You may be asked to attend a preadmission clinic, where you visit for an hour or two, a week or so before the operation for these checks.

After - In Hospital

Your toe may be painful. You will be given injections or tablets to control this. Ask for more if the pain is unpleasant. A general anaesthetic will make you slow, clumsy and forgetful for about 24 hours. Do not make important decisions during that time. You will be able to walk around (with the help of crutches if necessary). The wound will have a bulky dressing over it and this will be changed to a light one at 24-48 hours.

Your stitches will be taken out about 10 days after your operation. About 1 cm of the wire is left sticking out of the end of your toe. This is so it can be removed in the clinic four to six weeks

after your operation. You do not need an anaesthetic to have your wire removed as this is not normally painful.

Wash around the dressing for the first ten days. You can wash the wound area as soon as the dressing has been removed. Soap and warm tap water are entirely adequate. Salted water is not necessary. You can shower or take a bath as often as you like.

You will be given an appointment to visit the Orthopaedic Out Patient Department to have your wire removed at 4-6 weeks.

After - At Home

When you go home, you will be able to move around the house and manage stairs by walking on your heel.

You will not be able to go shopping for the first few weeks after you go home. Please make arrangements for friends or family to shop for you.

Your toe will continue to improve for at least 3-4 months. You must not drive until your toe is completely comfortable. You are unlikely to drive for at least four weeks after your operation. How soon you can return to work depends on your job. If you can get to work without driving yourself or by using public transport you may be able to return to work six weeks after your operation. You should not do manual work until your toe is solidly fused. If you require a sickness certificate, please ask the staff.

Possible Complications

The bones may not fuse. If this occurs, a further operation may be necessary, though often it heals by scar tissue and gives a surprisingly satisfactory result. The wound or the wire can become infected. You will be given antibiotics if this happens but if the wire becomes infected it would be removed.

General Advice

The operation is relatively minor. Overall you will be much better off having your toe straightened.

We hope these notes will help you through your operation. They are a general guide. They do not cover everything. Also, all hospitals and surgeons vary a little. If you have any queries or problems, please ask the doctors or nurses.

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

We Value Your Views On Our Service

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at enquires@cqc.org.uk

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

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