



Management of Toe Deformities

What is a toe deformity?

You have been diagnosed with a toe or digital deformity, an abnormally shaped toe that rubs against adjacent toes or is irritated by your footwear. The affected toe is usually prominent and the joint may be fixed or contracted into a bent position. Symptoms include soreness between the toes, over the joint or on the tip of the toe. Hard skin or corns may form and there can be associated toenail damage. Symptoms tend to be relieved by wider/deeper or open toed shoes, or temporarily by chiropody treatment.

How is the diagnosis made?

This is normally a clinical diagnosis made by the examining the foot, looking for the presence of hard skin or corns and at the alignment of the toes when you stand up. X-rays are not normally required.

What are the treatment options?

Non-surgical treatment

- 1) Wider/deeper fitting shoes
- 2) Routine podiatry treatment
- 3) Padding, splints or toe props
- 4) Simple insoles

Surgical treatment

If non-surgical treatment is unsuccessful, an operation can be performed to straighten the bent toe. This is carried out in the Day Surgery Unit under local anaesthetic.

Your toe will be straightened by one of two methods:

- Arthroplasty – Straightening the toe by removing half of the contracted joint, making it mobile again.
- Arthrodesis – Straightening the toe by removing the whole of the contracted joint and placing a wire through the toe whilst the two bone ends fuse

together. The end of the wire will be visible at the top of your toe after the operation. The toe will not bend again. This procedure is generally performed on more unstable toes, determined by clinical examination, or when a bunion is present.

An incision is made on the top of your toe. The surgeon will use sutures to close the skin, which will be removed 10-14 days after the operation. The operation will take a maximum of 15 minutes.

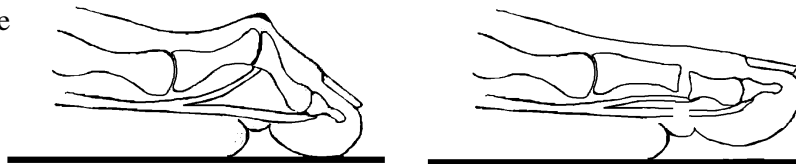
How long would this restrict my activities?

Two weeks after surgery, the sutures will be removed and you can bathe again. At this stage, you can return to a pair of roomy shoes. You can drive and participate in sports when you are back in footwear. It is normal for people to have two to three weeks off work for this type of operation.

NB If you have had an arthrodesis and have a wire protruding from your toe, you will have to be relatively careful and stay in your post-operative shoe until the wire is removed six weeks later.

Arthroplasty

Hammer Toe



Claw Toe

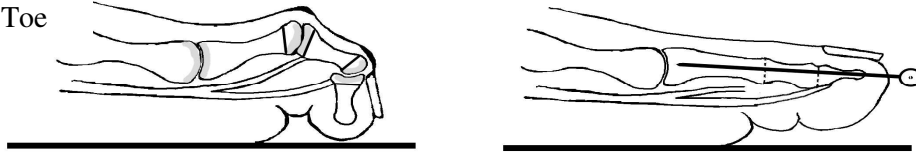


Mallet Toe



Arthrodesis

Unstable Toe



Are there any complications associated with the operation?

Specific complications of digital surgery include:

- Prolonged swelling
- Toe may be weak and not touch the ground
- Insufficient correction or recurrence of deformity
- Pin may become loose or require early removal. Joint fusion may not occur.

General Complications of foot surgery include:

- Continued pain
- Infection
- Blood clot
- Delayed healing
- Thickened scar
- Sensory Loss
- A chronic pain syndrome

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