

METATARSOPHALANGEAL ARTHRODESIS OF THE BIG TOE POST-OPERATIVE GUIDELINES

INITIAL SURGICAL DRESSING

A gauze dressing will be covered by a very padded cast. This cast is too wide to accommodate a rubber walking boot. Caution is used to avoid sliding when the cast is resting on a hard floor surface.

BED REST, ELEVATION, AND WEIGHTBEARING

Bed rest is prescribed for at least three days after operation if one foot is operated upon and four days after operation if both feet are operated upon. During the period of bed rest, the feet are elevated above the level of the heart. After the period of bed rest, progress with sitting with the operated foot (feet) elevated at chair level. Progressing with ambulation around the house is encouraged. Confinement to the house for the first week is recommended.

Partial weightbearing is allowed after the first 24 hours when getting up to go to the bathroom. During the first 24 hours, effort is made to avoid weightbearing on the ball of the foot. With the crutches, place weight as lightly as possible on the heel. After the first 24 hours, approximately 50% of one's weight is placed on the foot. Full weight bearing is allowed with a cane about 2 weeks after operation.

CRUTCHES/WALKER/CANE

Crutches or a walker are usually used for the first two weeks. A walker is recommended if one is not feeling secure with the crutches. After using the crutches, a period of using a cane may be useful while transitioning to full weightbearing. Initially, the cane is used on the side of the operated foot if one

CRUTCHES/WALKER/CANE (continued)

foot is operated upon. As comfort improves, walking is done more smoothly with a cane when the cane is in the opposite hand. A cane is used for about 8 weeks and several days. It is usually reasonable to discard the cane several days after the pins crews have been removed. (See Bandages, Casts, and Walker Boots.)

BANDAGES AND CASTS

Bandage Management: On the day of surgery: Please follow the bandage instructions given to you in the postoperative orders.

First and second weeks: The bandage will be covered by a cast.

After 2 weeks a new cast is applied.

After 8 weeks, the pins are removed but no incision is required to remove the pins. An initial local anesthetic may be used. A firm-soled “postoperative shoe” is used for a month and an Ace bandage is wrapped around the great toe and arch for comfort.

FOOTWEAR, ELASTIC STOCKINGS, AND BRACES

A loosely fitting shoe is used after three months postoperative.

SHOWERING, SUTURES AND DRIVING

While a cast is in place, keep it dry when showering. This can be done with double trash bags bound tightly at the knee with a strong rubber band. Commercially available “cast guards” are available through the internet. Search on Google using the term Cast Guard. The showering cast guards are also available at some orthopaedic supply stores.

Sutures are removed two weeks after operation.

Driving is usually not safe for about ten weeks after operation if the right foot is operated upon. If the left foot is operated upon, driving is usually practical at two to three weeks. For left foot operations, earlier driving may cause increased swelling in the right foot as the foot is in a dependent position.

REHABILITATIVE EXERCISES

First week (0 to 6 days): No exercises requested.

Second week: Isometric contraction of the leg muscles are done while the leg still is still in the cast. Tighten the muscles of the leg without excessive deliberate motion in the toes or ankle. Tighten the muscles for 20 seconds, relax briefly and repeat. A “set” of isometric contractions is 5. Do a set each hour until the cast is discontinued.

After eight weeks the patient has access to the foot and exercise is started with massage. Use both hands to grasp the big toe, the joint of the big toe, and the bone in the midfoot (metatarsal) that connects to the big toe. Apply progressively greater pressure with the hands. A set is defined as 5 twenty-second (hand massage applications). Do 4 or 5 sets per day in the initial two weeks of massage. Formal physical therapy exercises start about 10 weeks after operation.

SKIN CARE

After the cast is removed (2 months after surgery), soften the skin with Vaseline, vitamin E ointment or a thick hand lotion like Curel. When using Vaseline, cover the whole foot with a light amount of Vaseline and wipe away any excess. Do 2 or 3 times a day for about two weeks.