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Recovery Information (please keep this important information safe)

NB The vast majority of this advice is only for patients who have had surgery that allows immediate post-operative weight-bearing. Some procedures preclude weight-bearing completely for a period of 3-8 weeks, depending on the type of surgery; but this will have been made clear to you before your operation.

Prior to surgery

Prepare yourself and your home so you are able to keep your activity to an absolute minimum in the initial stages post surgery. Ensure you have organised for care for any family members you normally look after and your pets. Ensure you have some suitable footwear to use for when you are advised you can go back into shoes – we would advise a sturdy lace or Velcro fastening trainer or other supportive fastening shoe.

The First 24-Hours after Surgery

You may walk on the foot, but **only** to go to the toilet and back or other **essential** walking such as going to bed etc. Elevate your foot six-inches above your hip, using cushions under the heel and knee, with the knee slightly bent. Do **not** place cushions under the calf-muscle or cross your legs as this will compress the large blood vessels. Every hour, lower your leg down and rotate your foot for a couple of minutes to help your circulation. Use ice packs (a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a damp tea-towel) every 2-hours for 10-minutes at the back of the knee followed by 10-minutes on top of the ankle; this is useful for the first few days. Take your pain killers at regular intervals as prescribed.

24-72 Hours

Pain following surgery usually settles quite quickly after 24-hours. If your pain is increasing you should contact us for advice. You should continue to be very restful, only being on your foot for essential activities, and continue to keep your leg elevated whenever resting. Continue to carry out ankle exercise, this will help your circulation and reduce the chances of developing a *deep vein thrombosis* (blood clot). Keep your compression stockings on and pulled up. You will usually be seen for a re-dressing between 7-14 days following surgery. You should spend 5-10 minutes per hour trying to move your toes, even though this may feel quite sore. You may remove your post-op sandal in bed.

3-Days to 1st Re-dress

Your dressing should remain on and you should refrain from getting it wet or too warm. Unless otherwise advised you can increase your activity minimally – i.e. to get yourself a drink. You should still be mainly resting with your foot elevated, to reduce swelling and allow the skin and bone to heal. You must not carry out any of the normal household chores – such as cooking and cleaning. You will be advised at your first redressing whether you can commence bathing and if you can increase your mobility. Ensure you continue to keep your compression stockings on and continue your ankle exercises.

2-Weeks Post-op

You should still continue to elevate the leg whenever you are resting. You may gently increase the amount of time you spend on the foot. Unless advised otherwise at your redressing appointment, you should be on your foot for no more than 10 minutes in every hour. You should refrain from doing any household chores, but may be able to make yourself a light lunch. If the foot becomes painful and swollen, you are probably overdoing it and will need to reduce your activity.

If you continue to be active when your foot is telling you otherwise, you are increasing your risk of a delay in wound healing and prolonged swelling. Whenever you are sitting you should continue to elevate your leg and do your ankle exercises.

3 Weeks plus post op

You should now begin to increase your activity gradually, try to pace your activity throughout the day and rest at regular intervals with your foot elevated. Start by carrying out light tasks around the house, progressing these steadily over the next few weeks. You will have good days and bad days (a bad day means you may have overdone your activities). You will notice more swelling at the end of the day than the beginning; this is **normal**; and as previously stated, the swelling can take up to six months or longer to settle right down. To try and contain the swelling and help you recover quickly you should wear your trainer/supportive shoe all day – both in the house and outdoors for the next 4 weeks. Avoid wearing slip on shoes and sandals – unless advised otherwise by us. By and large, we do expect you to be comfortable and walking reasonably normally by about 6-weeks post-op for the majority of forefoot procedures. It is, however, still possible to develop an infection at anytime during the early recovery period and the signs of infection would be: increased pain, redness and pussy wound discharge. If this occurs, please contact us.

Times to Complete Recovery

There are no set rules here and your total recovery depends on your ability to heal and the type of surgery you have had. By complete recovery, we mean, being able to return to your full activities without pain and in footwear of your choice (within reason!). This may be 3-months for hallux valgus and other forefoot metatarsal surgery; 2-months for neuroma surgery and lesser toe surgery, but 9-12 months for Tibialis Posterior Dysfunction Syndrome and repair of flatfoot deformity. Return to work will depend on your type of employment (travel arrangements to and from work) and again, the type of surgery undertaken. For soft-tissue procedures, you may be able to drive and return to work after just a few days, whereas with procedures involving bone surgery with fixation pins and / or screws, plates etc., we recommend a minimum of 2-weeks off work and 4-weeks before driving. For more major surgeries requiring a period of non-weight-bearing e.g. 4-8 weeks, it may be 2-3 months before you will be able to return to work and 6-months before you are able to return to normal activities. . Driving –you must feel safe to drive and carry out an emergency stop.

Wound Care

Unsightly scarring (hypertrophic or keloid) is more common in Afro-Caribbean; Middle and far-Eastern skin-types. Scarring can be reduced by starting to use – 2-weeks after surgery – Cica Care or Boots scar reduction patches and we also recommend vigorous scar massage with Bio Oil from 4 weeks onwards.

Finally: be a patient patient and remember, it always takes longer to recover from surgery than you think.

Form A2