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## **Big Toe Arthritis: 1<sup>st</sup> MTPJ Arthrodesis**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Arthritis commonly affects the joint at the base of the big toe, namely the first metatarsophalangeal joint. Unlike arthritis in many other joints, arthritis in this joint can develop at a younger age, and is particularly seen in active people such as runners. Fusion or "Arthrodesis" of this joint is the most reliable method of relieving pain and returning people to their active lifestyles. After first metatarsophalangeal joint fusion, most patients have little or no discomfort, and are able to lead active lives.

### **THE PROCEDURE**

There are a number of steps to this procedure:

1. General Anaesthetic
2. Administration of intravenous antibiotics
3. Ankle Block with local anaesthetic for post-operative pain relief
4. Incision made along the inside of the big toe
5. The remaining disease to the cartilage in the joint is removed, along with the bony spurs around the joint
6. The bones are compressed together in a functional position with titanium plates and screws
7. A check x-ray is performed
8. Wound Closure with sutures

### **RISKS & COMPLICATIONS**

Every surgical procedure carries some risk. These risks are largely uncommon and many are rare.

They include:

- Anaesthetic complications
- Drug reactions
- Wound infection
- Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)/Pulmonary embolism (PE)
- Sensory nerve injury
- Chronic Regional Pain Syndrome
- Non-union (the bones failing to fuse together)
- Malpositioning

## **POST OPERATIVE PROTOCOL**

1 night in hospital for observation, training with hospital physiotherapist to walk using a post-operative surgical shoe

Weight-bearing is allowed immediately from day one

During the first six weeks post surgery, weight-bearing is in a post-operative shoe

Pain killers required for up to 2 weeks

First post-op appointment roughly 2 weeks post surgery for wound check

Post-operative shoe is removed and transition into normal shoes occurs at 6 weeks

Return to most activities by 3 - 4 months

Full recovery 6 months

## **PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS**

If you have any queries or concerns, contact Dr. Ling's rooms on 9650 4782 between business hours. After hours or on weekends, if your matter is urgent, please present to the Emergency Department at Prince of Wales Hospital if you are an adult, or Sydney Children's Hospital if the patient is your child, and you will be seen by the Orthopaedic Registrar on call, who will contact Dr Ling directly