



## The practicalities of FOREFOOT SURGERY - Toes, Soft tissue

1. POST-SURGICAL SHOE: After surgery your foot will be placed into a special shoe that allows you to walk on the heel/hindfoot so there is no pressure on the surgery site of the forefoot/ toes. If you've just had a soft tissue procedure done, there may be no need for a shoe - just a bulky dressing.

2. PAIN CONTROL: Local anaesthetic will be placed into the area of surgery, or a nerve block. The nerve block can make the foot numb for up to 48 hrs. The local block wears off in 6 -12 hours. Make sure you are taking pain medication prescribed BEFORE the block wears off.

The first 48 hrs are the worst, then it starts easing off. Wean yourself from the high schedule drugs if pain improving (e.g. Targinact/ Tramadol ...)

3. MOBILITY: After most surgeries, **unless told**, you will be able to weight bear on the heel of your foot with the post-surgical shoe. You may need crutches for assistance in walking (for balance), particularly if you had surgery on both feet at the same time.

4. ELEVATION: Swelling after Foot and Ankle surgery can be significant. Being upright/erect, can lead to excessive swelling. It's important to keep the foot elevated at the level of your heart (roughly) as much as possible for the first 10 days. That's 2 pillows. Don't let the foot hang down for longer than 20-30 minutes when moving around in this time. Avoid resting on the heel only – turn foot from side to side. This prevents pressure on the heel.

5. SHOWERING/ BATHING: It is best to sit while showering initially. It's important to keep the dressings and the bandages dry until removed at your first post-surgery visit and examination (at about 9-12 days)

EITHER: Use a **cast cover** – from pharmacies OR \*

OR place a plastic bag over a rolled towel tied with string on the thigh of the operated foot, and shower while sitting on a plastic stool/chair placed in the shower, with your foot elevated on stool.

OR you can bath with one's foot resting on the edge of the bath - but still seal with a plastic bag and tape. If your dressing gets very wet with water or blood, contact the rooms.

Do NOT remove dressing unless instructed.

7. Other advice:

- **Elevation** reduces pain. Your foot/ankle will respond favorably to elevation with regards to pain.
- Watch for constipation and take a laxative plus lots of water if at risk.

8. POST OP VISIT: This will usually be 9-12 days post-surgery. The practice will contact you with an appointment, usually a Wed afternoon. At this visit you will have the shoe +

bandages removed and all the dressings, and have the incisions checked and re-dressed. Then, depending on the surgery, placed back into the special shoe if treated with one after the surgery. You will be given further instructions at this time about post op care.

Bring a loose short/ ankle sock with you to this visit.

10. DRIVING: No driving after surgery even after a local anaesthetic due to risks of side effects of medication.

Don't drive until after the first post-op visit - to prevent swelling and bleeding, unless specifically agreed.

Returning to driving a car depends on the side of surgery (right or left) and the surgery done:

Generally, if you have had surgery on the **Right foot** you cannot drive for 6 weeks.

If on the **Left foot** you may be able to drive an AUTOMATIC car after the post-surgery visit 9-12 days post operation, being careful getting in and out of the vehicle – to be confirmed at the post-surgery visit, where you will get further instructions.

Life Kingsbury Med Suites, Suite 601, Wilderness Road, Claremont

Sandra: [sandra@drmccollum.co.za](mailto:sandra@drmccollum.co.za)

\***Items** – avail to buy from:

- Malcolm Freedman, orthotist at ORTHOPRO, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Kingsbury Med Suites 021 206 7877

or from Medical suppliers + local pharmacies

Boot size	Shoe size
check that calf fits too	
Small	3 - 6
Med	7 - 9
Large	9 - 11
X-large	11 +

If borrowing a boot:

Try on boot for correct size. Ensure that boot has all parts. Wash 2<sup>nd</sup> hand boot before use. Bring a long sock to follow up visit.



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### GENERAL EXPECTATIONS + GUIDELINES

These guidelines are adjusted according to your specific surgery.

- You **will** require **help at home** if/ while on 2 crutches.

**Elevation** - Elevate op leg at home, most of the time/ as directed for at least until first post-op appmt at 9-12 days.

- gutter pillow/ 2-3 cushions – foot higher than heart. Less elevation as swelling decreases.

- Avoid lying/sitting with heel on same spot, turn foot from side to side.

### **Equipment**

- **Crutches** (*metal, elbow*)\* - If required - Please obtain before surgery, if Med Aid does not cover. Practice if possible, Available after op in ward – physio will show you how to use them and teach post-op exercises. Write name on crutches.

- Knee Scooter – if indicated – Contact Prof's rooms for hire details

**Keep dry** – sit in shower (plastic garden chair)

- Shower/ basin wash or Bathing. **Cast cover\*** or plastic bag + towel on thigh (each layer tied with string), and elevate leg on a stool.

- Take anti-clotting medication if prescribed.

### PREPARATIONS AT HOME - for post-op period

#### **Bathroom**

Keep dressings dry – cast cover or plastic bag + towel

Plastic chair in shower + higher stool, or bath with foot on edge.

Non-slip rubber mat/ towel on shower floor.

**Seating** – avoid sitting still for long periods of time

- to prevent stiffness, swollen feet + possible clots.

Helpful - Upright chairs with armrests.

**Reduce risk of tripping** – wet floor, loose rugs/ carpets, animals, electrical cords, toys....

#### **Stairs with crutches**

- UP - Good leg up first, followed by op leg

- DOWN - Crutches first, then op leg, then good leg.

#### **Other helpful tips**

Crutches\* – store in corner/ upside down

To carry items with you on while on 2 crutches

- Bag with long handles over neck/ backpack/ moonbag

- Plastic urinal "bottle" for men/ women - useful at night - optional

**No open wounds pre-op** – report to Prof's rooms with photo.

#### **Stop some meds pre-op:**

- ? days pre op – anti-clotting + anti-inflammatory meds e.g. Disprin, Ecotrin, Nurofen, Voltaren, Coxflam etc

**Allowed pre-op** for pain – Panado/ Painblok, Stilpane, Synaleve, Tramacet

Reduce risk of **constipation**

- Pre-op - Avoid heavy meal with meat and fat day before op.

- Post-op – lots of fluids, veg, fruit, yogurt, oat bran, laxatives, etc

### Night before Operation

- Nil per mouth - 6 hours pre-admission or as directed.

- Do not shave operation site at home and don't shave legs for last 3 days pre-op (micro-cuts).

### BRING TO HOSP

Crutches - Med Aid may not pay - check pre-op re Ortho appliances.

Loose trousers/ shorts/ skirt to fit over bandage/ cast.

NO VALUABLES except cellphone - - **ALL VALUABLES AT OWN RISK**

### HOSPITAL

Bring ID document + Med Aid card.

**Admission time** - as directed by Prof's secretary – see notes issued.

### **Anaesthetist**

- discuss anaesthetic, pain meds. Pre-med if indicated 1-2hrs pre-op

**Foot soak** in antiseptic solution

➔ Operating Theatre

**Pain control** – prescribed as appropriate to patient's needs.

**Wound** - covered with bandages and a cast/ post-op shoe/ moonboot

**CALL – DON'T FALL!** Ask a nurse to walk with you while at hospital.

**Physio** – practice: walk (crutches), chair, toilet, stairs, + exercises

**Hosp Stay** – usually on the day of op. Overnight if indicated

### DISCHARGE – loose clothing!

**Prescription provided** – meds to be obtained from own pharmacy:

- Meds for pain – take regularly as needed, not compulsory.

- Anti clotting tablets – if prescribed, complete the course.

- Crutches/ knee scooter, cast/ boot/ post-op shoe as per surgeon

### AT HOME

**Elevate** – as long as needed to reduce swelling and pain.

**Expect:** bruising, swelling, warmth, numbness, + discomfort/ pain.

- Do basic leg **exercises** as per physio in hospital to improve circulation, and to improve core strength.

**Pain** - Take pain medication +/- anti-inflammatories regularly initially, as prescribed. If no pain, then meds are not compulsory.

**REPORT** any **unusual/ new symptoms** such as: fever; excessive/ increasing pain or swelling that doesn't settle; bleeding; wet/ very loose dressing; irritation from cast - email photo.



## Prof Graham McCollum

601 Life Kingsbury Medical Suites, Claremont

021 671 6213

Emergency 072 2777 043

[dr.grahammccollum@gmail.com](mailto:dr.grahammccollum@gmail.com)

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**Dressing change:** 9-12 days post-op, usually Wed afternoon. Sec will call you to book appointment. Bring Moonboot + long sock (long, **not short boot**)\*or borrow – see below.