

**DR ANDREW WINES MBBS FRACS (Orth)**  
**Adult and Paediatric Orthopaedic Surgeon**  
**Foot, Ankle and Trauma Surgery**

**1<sup>st</sup> METATARSOPHALANGEAL JOINT FUSION**

**INTRODUCTION**

The joint at the base of the big toe (1<sup>st</sup> metatarsophalangeal joint) is commonly affected by arthritis. Fusion of the joint is the most reliable method of relieving pain and improving function. After 1<sup>st</sup> metatarsophalangeal joint fusion, most patients have little or no discomfort and are able to live a very active life.

**THE SURGERY**

1<sup>st</sup> metatarsophalangeal joint fusion surgery has a number of steps. These include:

- i. general anaesthetic, intravenous antibiotics
- ii. incision along inside of big toe
- iii. removal of remaining joint cartilage
- iv. insertion of bone graft
- v. fixation with plate and screws
- vi. check x-ray
- vii. closure of wound with stitches/sutures
- viii. insertion of Painbuster (local anaesthetic infusion pump)

**RISKS OF SURGERY**

All surgical procedures carry some risk. Fortunately the risk of complications with 1<sup>st</sup> metatarsophalangeal joint surgery is low. Some of the risks of surgery include:

- Infection
- Problems with wound healing
- Nerve injury causing numbness, tingling and/or pins and needles.
- Scarring
- Non union (the bone doesn't fuse together)
- Deep venous thrombosis/pulmonary embolism. (The risk of DVT increases with smoking, the oral contraceptive pill and hormone replacement therapy, immobility and obesity).
- Anaesthetic complications
- Drug allergy
- Ongoing pain.

**GUIDELINES FOR EXPECTED POST OPERATIVE RECOVERY**

Keep foot elevated as much as possible, especially for initial 72 hours. Keep dressings dry and intact until post operative appointment.

Pain killers may be required for up to 2 weeks. Antibiotics for up to 2 weeks.

Removal of stitches/sutures: 10-14 days at first post operative appointment.

Protected weight bearing: 6 weeks on crutches

- post operative heel weight bearing wedge shoe.
- crutches as required.
- Maximum comfortable heel height 3 cm.

Resumption of most activities: 12 weeks. Full recovery: 3-6 months.

Every patient's recovery is individual and depends on the severity of the injury and the complexity of the surgery.

**ANY PROBLEMS**

During office hours contact Dr Wines' office on (02) 9409 0500.

After hours please contact the hospital where your surgery was performed.