



Post-Op Protocol

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IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING SURGERY

- Elevation is absolutely critical to your recovery. Ice is not as helpful because you have thick bandages/dressings. Keep your foot elevated 12-16" above your heart for the first 72 hours after surgery.
- Swelling is controlled by elevation, not medication. The best way to keep your swelling and therefore pain under control is elevation. Ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs don't reduce swelling that has already occurred, they prevent new inflammation and subsequent swelling.
- Don't trade sleep for elevation. If you can't sleep on your back with your foot elevated, stop elevating. Sleep is more important.
- If you have post op orders that say you can remove the dressing and feel it's necessary you can, otherwise this is done for you at the post op visit. Never remove a splint or cast on your own. **Specific to bunion repairs: please do not remove or alter your bandage. The toe is splinted to ensure the correct alignment while bone is healing.**
- Some bleeding is normal. Blood is sterile--it does not increase your likelihood of infection. If your bandages are soaked and uncomfortable, we can change your dressings. If you have some bleeding that looks unsightly, but doesn't hurt, its best to leave your dressings in place.
- Reinforce your dressing for breakthrough bleeding during the 1st 48 hours after surgery. We operated on your bone...its normal for it to bleed. Your dressings are sterile on the inside (including your blood). Removing your dressings also removes the sterility around the surgical site.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

Weeks 1 – 2

- Minimal activity out of the house. Gradually decrease the pain medication you're taking. Every patient is different in terms of pain management. You should have some discomfort, you just had surgery. Soreness is your body telling you to slow down, listen to it. **Your bone is healing during this time. Do not push through pain!**
- Exercise: You will get a good sense of how much you can be on your foot after the 1st 72 hours. You may go to your fitness center and do upper body/core exercises. You may ride a stationary bike on low resistance.

Weeks 2 – 6

- Gradually increasing activities. Stay in your boot or post op shoe for weightbearing activities. Listen to your foot. If it is sore, rest. Your bone and supporting soft tissues are still healing. Still too early to push through pain during activities.
- Exercise: After your sutures come out, you are able to get your foot wet. If you're a swimmer, you can begin swimming. Stay in deep water and do not push hard off the wall. Keep resistance low on exercise bike. You may use an elliptical trainer while wearing the post-op shoe.

Week 6 and Beyond

- After your 6-week post op Dr. Coetzee may recommend Physical Therapy (sometimes sooner than 6 weeks). PT helps to retrain your gait and re-educate your muscles from walking improperly for 6 weeks. You may begin doing regular activities gradually and wearing regular shoes. It is not unusual to take 2-3 weeks to feel comfortable walking in regular shoes after your 6 week follow up. Keep using your Aircast boot if you have pain while walking in shoes. Please be patient. It takes between 6-12 months to get to a final result. You will keep improving up until a year after surgery.