

How long in hospital?

This depends very much on your general condition. Ideally you can go home after a day or so. Often patients find it more convenient to stay for a week or longer. An appointment for a check up must be made with the surgeon about 10 days after the operation. Details will be finalised after the operation.

Sick notes

Please ask the doctor for sick notes, certificates etc.

After you leave hospital

You should feel well within a week of the operation.

Driving

You can drive as soon as you can make an emergency stop without discomfort in the wound, i.e. after about 10 days.

What about sex?

You can restart sexual relations within a week or two, when the wound is comfortable.

Work

You should be able to return to a light job after about 2 weeks, and any heavy job within 4 weeks.

Complications

Delayed healing sometimes happens. We will talk to you about this. If you think that all is not well, please ask the nurses or doctors. Infection is sometimes seen. You will be given antibiotics to prevent this. Aches and twinges may be felt in the wound for up to 6 months. Occasionally there are numb patches in the skin around the wound which get better after 2 to 3 months.

General advice

The operation is a small one and usually causes no problems. If you have any problems or queries, please ask the nurses or doctors.

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TOE AMPUTATION

Your Toe Amputation Operation

These notes give a guide to your stay in hospital. They also give an idea about what it will be like afterwards. They do not cover everything. If you want to know more, please ask.

What is the problem?

There is not enough blood getting into your toe to keep it alive or there is so much infection that the tissues have died. The lack of blood causes severe pain and allows serious infection to take hold. The only choice is to take off the toe. Sometimes the toe has shrivelled up and is a nuisance. Sometimes more than one toe needs to come off. Sometimes the operation is done at the same time as an operation on the blood vessels.

What does the operation consist of?

Usually the skin can be stitched up over the wound after removing the toe. Sometimes it is better to let the wound heal up by itself without any stitches. This takes 3 or 4 weeks.

WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE THE OPERATION?

Reception

When registering at reception your medical aid details will be required. Your medical aid may require that you obtain an authority number from them for the hospital. Please check this. If you are not on a member of a medical aid you will be required to pay a deposit or to sign an indemnity form. As far as possible we will try to advise you about hospital costs before your admission.

Welcome to the ward

You will be welcomed to the ward by the nurses or the receptionist and will have your details checked. Some basic tests will be done such as pulse, temperature, blood pressure and urine examination. You will be asked to hand in any medicines or drugs you may be taking, so that your drug treatment in hospital will be correct. Please tell the nurses of any allergies to drugs or dressings. The surgeon will have explained the operation and you will be asked to sign your consent for the operation. If you are not clear about any part of the operation, then read this again and then ask for more details from the surgeon or from the nurses.

Visit by the anaesthetist.

The anaesthetist who will be giving your anaesthetic will interview and examine you. He will be especially interested in chest troubles, dental treatment and any previous anaesthetics you have had. He may want to use a spinal or epidural anaesthetic. This helps with pain control after the operation. He will talk to you about this

Diet.

You will have your usual diet until 6 hours before the operation when you will be asked to take nothing by mouth. This will let your stomach empty to prevent vomiting during the operation.

Timing of the operation.

The timing of your operation is pre-arranged so that the nurses will tell you when to expect to go to the operating theatre. Do not be surprised, however, if there are changes to the exact timing.

Transfer to theatre.

You will be taken on a trolley to the operating suite by the staff. You will be wearing a cotton gown, rings will be fastened with tape and removable dentures will be left on the ward. There will be several checks on your details on the way to the operating theatre where your anaesthetic will begin.

The operation is then performed.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE OPERATION.

Coming round after the anaesthetic.

Although you will be conscious a minute or two after the operation ends, you are unlikely to remember anything until you are back in your bed on the ward. Some patients feel a bit sick for up to 24 hours after operation, but this passes off. You will be given some treatment for sickness if necessary. You may be given oxygen from a face mask for a few hours if you have had chest problems in the past.

Will it hurt?

There is discomfort on moving rather than severe pain. You will be given injections or tablets to control this as required. Ask for more if the pain is still unpleasant. You will be expected to get out of bed the day after operation despite the discomfort. You will not do the wound any harm, and the exercise is very helpful for you. The second day after operation you

should be able to spend most of your time out of bed and in reasonable comfort. You should be able to walk slowly along the corridor. By the end of one week the wound should be virtually painfree.

Drinking and eating

You will be able to drink within an hour or two of the operation provided you are not feeling sick. The next day you should be able to manage normal food.

Opening bowels

It is quite normal for the bowels not to open for a day or so after operation. If you have not opened your bowels after two days and you feel uncomfortable, ask the nurses for a laxative.

Passing urine

It is important that you pass urine and empty your bladder within 6-12 hours of the operation. If you find using a bed pan or a bottle difficult, the nurses will assist you to a commode or the toilet.

If you still cannot pass urine let the nurses know and steps will be taken to correct the problem.

Sleeping

You will be offered painkillers rather than sleeping pills to help you to sleep. If you cannot sleep despite the painkillers please let the nurses know.

Physiotherapy

The physiotherapist will check that you are clearing your lungs of phlegm by coughing and that you are helping your circulation by continuous movement of body and limbs.

The wound and stitches

The wound has a dressing which may show some staining with old blood in the first 24 hours. We will look at the wound after a week. There may be stitches in the wound which will be removed after 10 days. If the wound has not been stitched it will be redressed from time to time.

Washing

You can wash the wound area as soon as the dressing has been removed. Soap and warm tap water are entirely adequate. Salted water is not necessary. You can shower or take a bath as often as you want.