



# Toe mobilisation following bunion surgery

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A patient's guide

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Postoperative swelling and stiffness is common after bunion surgery. Both can be minimised by careful mobilisation of the big toe joint in the weeks following surgery.

This document is aimed at helping you through those initial postoperative weeks.

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## Operation to two weeks

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In the fortnight following surgery you will have a dressing on the foot, and the shoe which was fitted in the operating theatre. You should wear the postoperative shoe, day and night. You can wiggle the toes, but the aim

of this fortnight is to rest and get the skin wounds soundly healed. If you are sitting raise the foot on a chair, or by sitting across a sofa – this will reduce the swelling.

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## Weeks three to six

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In this time you will start to mobilise the big toe:

### **Mobilisation Exercises:**

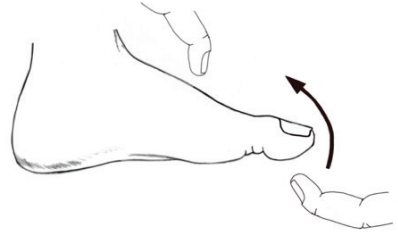
To be undertaken for about five minutes, on about 4 occasions per day.

Place the index finger of one hand under the sole of the foot. The other index finger is placed on the top of the great toe. The toe is then pushed downwards, until there is slight discomfort, when all of the toes are curled.





The index fingers are then switched around and the reverse exercise undertaken – with one finger over the top of the arch, one under the tip of the great toe. Push up on the toe. Then lift and extend all of the toes upwards.



You need to keep the postoperative shoe on all the time, apart from when exercising and cleaning the foot. It is also worth massaging the scar with some bland cream, such as E45 or Nivea.

During this time, you can walk for increasing distances, but if the foot swells or becomes uncomfortable – STOP, and rest with your foot up for a while.

**Listen to the foot – the pain and swelling will tell you when to rest!**

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## Week six

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An x-ray will be taken to confirm that the position of the bones and screws has been maintained. You can then come out of the postoperative shoe into a comfortable shoe. Most patients find a Velcro strapped walking sandal best, although in the winter lamb's wool boots (such as Ugg boots) are best.

You need to practice walking, making sure that you walk through the big toe – HEEL/ TOE – without twisting the foot.

You may also find it helpful to go up onto tip-toe, making sure to keep the pulp of the great toe on the ground. You can start with both feet, and progress to just one foot,

As you get stronger and more flexible, you can hold the tip-toe position for 10 seconds or so.

Walking uphill and upstairs may also help.



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## The Final Result

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It takes up to a year for the foot to settle following foot surgery. A good indicator of when things have finally settled is when the scar goes white – the swelling in the scar has resolved, as has the foot.

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