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Reading Foot & Ankle Unit

Patient Information Leaflet - Surgery for curly toes

Introduction

I offer this operation (a flexor tenotomy), to children with curly toes that cause problems and for whom nonoperative treatments have failed. (See general information leaflet on curly toes.) You will also have an opportunity to discuss any further concerns with me before we go ahead either in clinic or on the morning of the operation.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed as a day case under a general anaesthetic so your child will be asleep. (Please also watch this [YouTube video](#) to help you prepare.) The short procedure involves releasing the tight tendon causing the toe to curl through a small scar placed in the skin crease underneath the toe. We use dissolvable stitches covered by a non-sticky dressing and then wrap the foot in a crepe bandage (see picture right).

What are the success rates?

The operation is highly successful at relieving symptoms of redness, rubbing, blisters and toe tip pain. Depending on how flexible the curly toes are and despite releasing the tight tendon, some toes do remain curly. If there are ongoing symptoms or a recurrence of symptoms which are troublesome, then a more definitive procedure to fix the toe straight can be performed later.

Are there any risks?

As with all surgery there are small risks involved, which we will discuss with you fully before you sign the consent form. For this operation, the main risks are infection and nerve injury (causing numbness of the toe). Loss of the blood supply to the toe is extremely rare and not something I have experienced.

What is the aftercare?

It is important to elevate the foot on pillows for 72 hours after the operation to help the swelling settle and to aid healing. Crutches are useful but not essential to get around, particularly at school. I see patients at 2 weeks after the operation in clinic to check the healing. Sometimes physio is helpful to strengthen the foot, ankle and calf. I would anticipate a return to sports at 4 weeks.

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