



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Digital Arthroplasty/ Arthrodesis

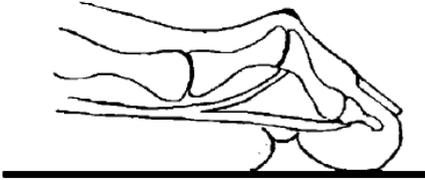
Issued by the Podiatric Surgery Department



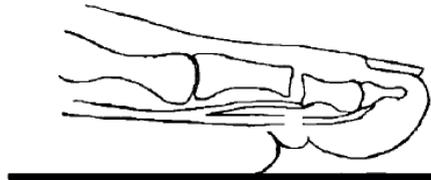
This leaflet is about the operations of digital arthroplasty and arthrodesis.

## About Your Operation

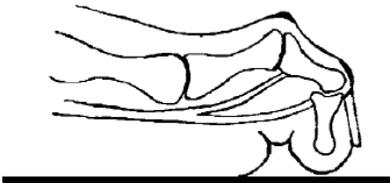
### Arthroplasty:



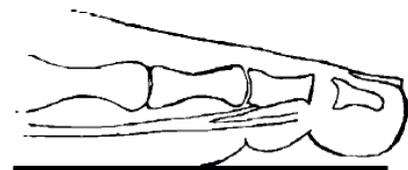
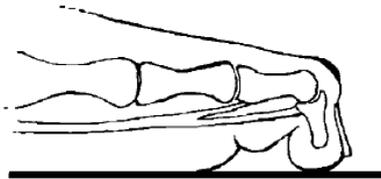
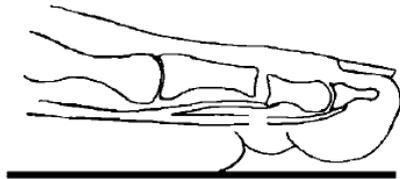
Hammer toe



Claw toe



Mallet toe

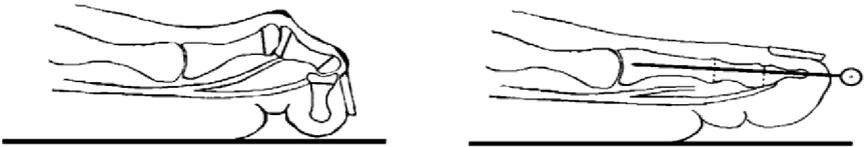


# Arthroplasty

The problem toe will have a section of joint removed to reduce the prominence. The toe will be repaired in a realigned position. It may not be completely straight but will be improved.

There may be some swelling for some months after the operation.

# Arthrodesis



When the toe is very unstable, both sections of the joint will be removed to allow the toe to straighten, and reduce the prominence. The toe will be repaired in a realigned position.

The toe may not be completely straight but it will be improved.

The pin is usually removed one month after the operation, or sooner if it loosens or causes a problem.

The toe may be slightly swollen for some months after the operation.

# The operation

The operation is usually performed under a local anaesthetic. This is often injected around the base of the toe, but sometimes, particularly if tendon releases or fixation wires are to be used, the anaesthetic will be injected around the ankle.

Most patients find this to be less painful than a dental injection.

The operation takes about 20 minutes but you should expect to be at the hospital for between 2 and 4 hours.

Please remember you will not be able to drive home.

## **The first two days after surgery**

You will be able to:

- stand and with care take your own weight after the operation - you must rest with your feet at or above hip level
- you can walk for up to 5 minutes per hour, which may allow you to complete essential tasks such as getting to the bathroom
- get about a little more after the first 2 days.

## **After four days**

Within 2 weeks you must attend the clinic to have your dressing changed. The wound will be examined and you will be given advice on how to gently increase your activity.

## **After 12 days**

Between 2 and 3 weeks the stitches will be removed as the skin will have healed. You will be able to move about quite well, but may not be ready to wear your normal footwear. Advice will be given about:

- increasing your activity
- the gradual return to normal footwear
- how to look after your foot
- how to exercise your foot

## **After six weeks**

Over the 2 to 6 weeks after surgery your foot will return more to normal and you will soon be able to wear your usual footwear. You may be fit enough to return to work. This will depend on your type of job and the sort of footwear you will need to wear for work. For a heavy job this may be an unrealistic expectation.

Other factors such as the severity of the deformity, circulation and your general health can also make a difference. Your foot should now be more comfortable but there will still be swelling, particularly towards the end of the day. This is normal and to be expected.

## **After six months**

Any swelling should now be slight; there may be none at all. You should now be starting to feel the full benefit of the surgery.

## **12 months after surgery**

Your foot will not improve any more. All of the healing is complete.

## **Benefits of surgery**

Surgery can help by:

1. reducing, or stopping completely, the pain from pressure points, corns or ulcers on hammer toe deformities
2. your toes will be straighter and function better
3. you will feel more comfortable when wearing your shoes.

## **Risks and complications of the operations**

1. 'Fat toe' – temporary swelling which may be prolonged and uncomfortable. This may remain for up to 12 months.
2. 'Floating toe' – toe may not touch or grip the ground. Treatment – splinting or re-operation if it is still a problem.
3. Thickened scar and or tender scar – may reduce over 12 months.
4. Areas of numbness – may reduce over 12 months.
5. Infection – sudden increase in pain and swelling on 2/3 days after surgery or later.
6. Recurrence of the deformity.
7. Neurovascular event – where the circulation to the toe shuts down, in the worst case this can mean that the toe needs to be amputated.

## **Arthroplasty**

Painful pseudarthrosis – pain continuing after the initial healing period due to impingement of bone and insufficient formation of a false fibrous joint. Treatment – steroid injection and splinting or if unresponsive, re-operation if persistent.

# Arthrodesis

Painful delayed or non-union of bone.

Treatment – splinting or if unresponsive, re-operation.

## Alternative treatments

- Repetitive chiropody
- Padding and strapping
- Silicone toe moulds – for flexible deformity
- Shoe modification
- Insoles (orthoses)

Thank you for reading this information leaflet. We hope it has been helpful. Should you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact us.

## Contact numbers

If you have any problems or queries after your surgery please contact the Podiatric Surgery Office for advice.

**Podiatric Surgery Office**

**01434 655 638**

**Monday-Friday (8am – 4pm)**

**Orthopaedic helpline:**

North Tyneside General Hospital 0191 293 4220

Wansbeck General Hospital 01670 529 431

Out of hours please contact NHS111 by dialing 111.

## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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