

# What to Expect After Having Joint Arthrodesis to Your Big Toe

For patients of Dr. Lau

## What is joint arthrodesis?

Joint arthrodesis is a surgery to fuse or glue the bones in your big toe together so the joint doesn't move.

## Why do I need this surgery?

You have arthritis in the big toe. We do this surgery to straighten the toe and stop the pain. The big toe will be straighter and stiffer after surgery.

## What to expect after the surgery

### On the day of your surgery:

Your foot is wrapped in a bandage and you wear a surgical shoe (special shoe that protects the foot). Do not change the bandage or take off the surgical shoe, even at night.

Expect your foot to be numb for 12 to 24 hours after the surgery.

To manage pain:

- Prop up your foot when you are sitting or lying down by putting pillows under your foot. This lessens swelling.
- Take pain medications as you need.

### On the day after surgery:

You can start walking on the outside or heel of the foot while wearing your surgical shoe.

Do not take off the surgical shoe.

Keep propping up your foot and taking pain medications as you need to manage your pain.

**When to call surgeon:**

Call Dr. Lau's office at 416 603 6292 right away if:

- your wound is still bleeding the day after surgery
- your foot feels numb or tingling the day after surgery
- your toes change colour (purple, white, or spotted) at any time

**2 weeks after surgery:**

You have a follow-up appointment in Fracture Clinic at Toronto Western.

- We take new x-rays to check on your recovery.
- We remove the bandage and sutures (stitches).

Keep wearing your surgical shoe.

**6 weeks after surgery:**

You have a follow-up appointment at Dr. Lau's office at Toronto Western.

We check on your recovery.

- **If you are healing well:** You can start wearing regular shoes (sneakers).
- **If you are healing slowly:** Keep wearing your surgical shoe until your next appointment.

**What side effects can I expect?**

Your toe may be swollen for 6 to 12 months after surgery. It may feel throbbing, achy and uncomfortable at the end of the day. This is normal and gets better over time.

**For more information:**

Dr. Johnny T.C. Lau, MD, MSc, FRCSC  
Orthopaedic Surgeon, Foot & Ankle Surgery  
Assistant Professor, University of Toronto

**Phone:** 416 603 6292

**Fax:** 416 603 3437

**Address:**

Schroeder Arthritis Institute  
University Health Network  
Toronto Western Hospital  
Room 13MC423  
399 Bathurst Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5T 2S8