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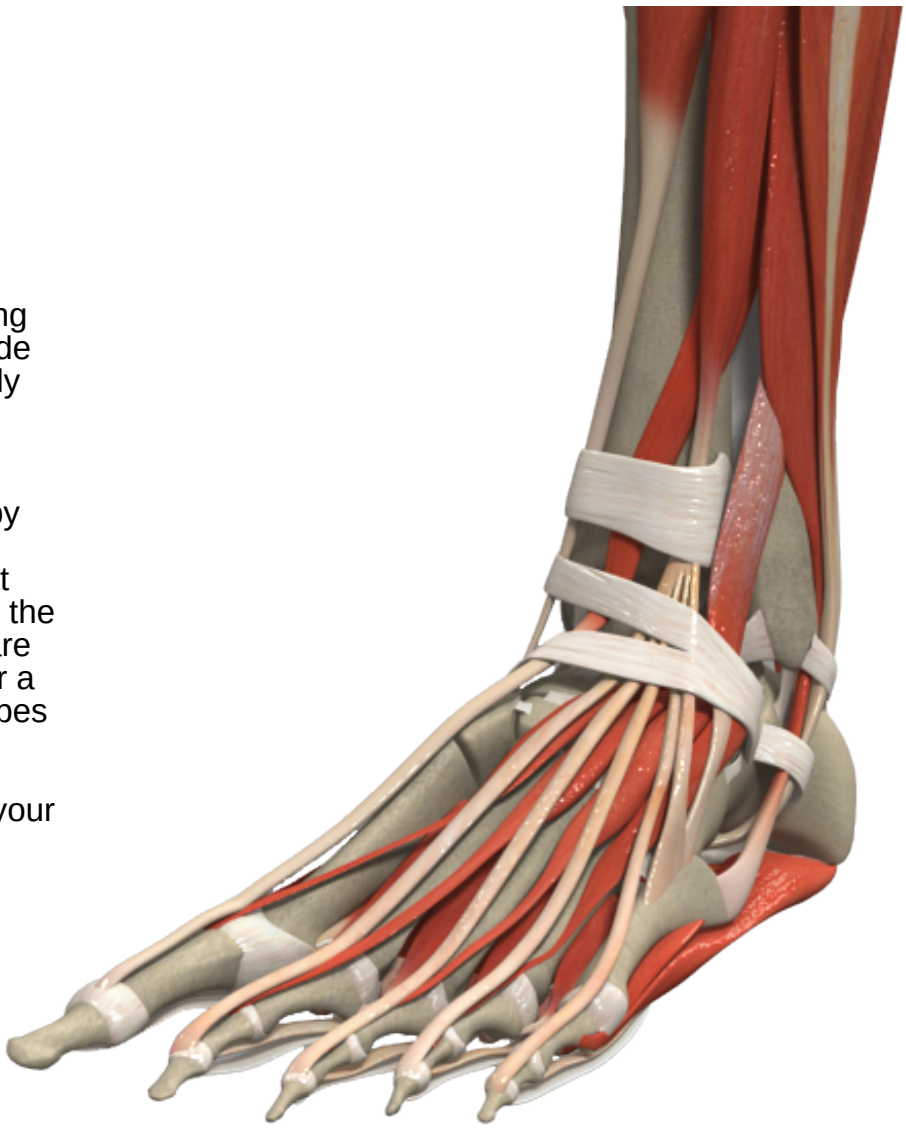
MEDICAL EDUCATION

Bunionectomy (and First Metatarsal Osteotomy)

A bunion is a bony bump, resulting from a misaligned joint, on the side of the big toe. A bunion is typically painful and may be unsightly. Bunions are primarily inherited, meaning they run in families, but may be irritated or made worse by pressure from shoes. A bunionectomy is a procedure that removes the bunion and realigns the joint to relieve foot pain. There are several techniques used to repair a bunion and this animation describes some of the more common techniques used today. Your physician can discuss details of your particular needs with you.



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Introduction

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Doctor's Personal Note: ***A Message From Your Doctor***

Thank you for visiting our website and viewing our 3D Animation Library. These animations should assist you in better understanding your condition or procedure. We look forward to answering any additional questions you may have at our next appointment.

What is a Bunion

A bunion is a deformity of bone and soft tissue that occurs at the joint between the big toe, or hallux, and the first bone in the foot, called the first metatarsal. The point where these bones meet is called the metatarsophalangeal, or MTP, joint. A variety of foot structure abnormalities that typically involve tendons and ligaments around the joint may cause the big toe to be gradually pulled toward the second toe. The head of the first metatarsal bone sticks out, resulting in a bunion that worsens over time. The tendons or ligaments that pull on the toe incorrectly, may become overstretched and weak, or tight and thickened, and are often associated with swelling and pain. Additionally, a watertight sac surrounding the joint, called the bursa, typically becomes swollen, resulting in an even larger bump and increased tenderness.

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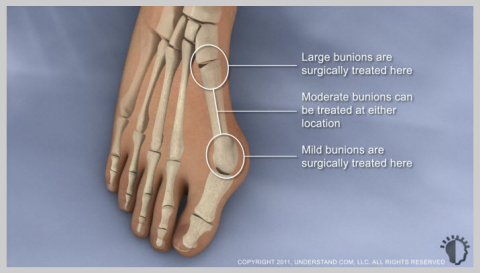

Preparation

There are a variety of bunionectomy procedures, which generally include a combination of techniques to achieve the final result. Your physician will decide which procedure and options are best for you based on your specific condition. Bunionectomy procedures are typically performed in a hospital or outpatient center, where you will be permitted to go home the day of the surgery. You may be given general anesthesia, which allows you to sleep during the procedure, but more commonly, you will be given local anesthesia with IV sedation. In this case your foot will be numb and you will be relaxed but not entirely asleep.

Procedure

Your surgeon will make an incision on the top of your big toe or on the side of your foot to expose the MTP joint. The bump is removed first and will only correct the deformity temporarily if it is not combined with other repairs. Typically, a small wedge of bone is also removed from the first metatarsal (first metatarsal osteotomy) in order to realign the joint. The bone is held in its new position with screws, pins, or plates. Additionally, loose tendons or ligaments often need to be shortened, or tight tendons or ligaments need to be lengthened, by cutting and repositioning them. For those who have had previous bunion surgery, any damaged portion of the joint may need to be removed. Once all repairs and adjustments have been made, the incision will be closed with sutures and a bandage will be wrapped around your foot.

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Recovery and Results

Following the procedure, you can expect to have some pain, and swelling, and will likely be advised to keep your foot elevated for a few days to reduce swelling. Depending on the type of procedure, you may need to use crutches for one to two weeks to avoid bearing weight on your foot. Sutures are typically removed in about two weeks, and any non-permanent screws or pins will be removed at variable times, depending on the type of procedure performed. You may be required to wear a surgical boot or shoe for several weeks to provide support for your foot as it heals, and your physician may recommend foot and toe exercises to keep your toe from becoming stiff. Your physician will advise you about when you may resume other activities.

Since bunions result from inherited foot anatomy, bunion surgery does not correct the cause of the deformity, but it does realign the toe, providing a remedy for the painful symptoms. A bunionectomy provides complete or nearly complete pain relief for most patients and improves the appearance of the foot indefinitely.

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