

## Education

### Hammertoe Repair

What is a hammertoe repair?

A hammertoe repair is a surgical procedure for a toe that is in a painful or awkward position. The repair is done by fusing, removing, or realigning the bones.

When is it used?

Reasons for doing this procedure are:

- Your toe has an abnormal shape and position that causes pain.
- One or more of the bones that make up your toe have become deformed. This may make it difficult or painful to walk. It may be hard to find shoes that are comfortable.

An example of an alternative is to choose to do nothing, recognizing the risks of your condition. You should ask your health care provider about these choices.

How do I prepare for a hammertoe repair?

Plan for your care and recovery after the operation. Find someone to drive you home after the procedure. Allow for time to rest and try to find other people to help you with your day-to-day duties.

Follow the instructions provided by your health care provider. No special preparation is usually needed.

What happens during the procedure?

You may be given a local or regional anesthetic. Either type of anesthesia should keep you from feeling pain during the operation.

The type of surgery you have depends on how misshapen and inflexible the toe is. The surgeon may make a cut over your toe and release the tendon by cutting it away from the bone. Or the surgeon may remove a small piece of bone from the toe. The surgeon may realign the tendons to reposition your toe or fasten the bones with pins. Sometimes the surgeon may have to join the bones in the toe, so that you will no longer be able to bend the toe, but the toe will be flat.

What happens after the procedure?

You can usually go home from the hospital the same day you have the operation. A dressing will be on your toe to keep it in its new position.

For at least a couple of weeks you will need to try to stay off the foot as much as possible. Your health care provider may want you to use crutches or a special shoe after surgery.

Ask your provider what steps you should take and when you should come back for a checkup.

What are the benefits of this procedure?

The deformed toe is in a better position than before the operation. This lessens the pain in your toe and makes it easier to find shoes that fit.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- A local or regional anesthetic may not numb the area quite enough and you may feel some minor discomfort during the surgery. Also, in rare cases, you may have an allergic reaction to the drug used in this type of anesthesia.
- The bones could go back to a painful or awkward position again.
- You may have infection or bleeding.
- The nerves or arteries in the area may be damaged.

- The toe may be swollen after surgery for several months.

You should ask your health care provider how these risks apply to you.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your provider right away if:

- You are in a lot of pain.
- You have a lot of swelling around the toe.
- You develop a fever.
- You have a lot of bleeding.

Call during office hours if:

- You have questions about the procedure or its result.
- You want to make another appointment.

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