



GUIDE TO RISKS OF FOREFOOT SURGERY

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Patient name:	<input type="text"/>	Consultant:	<input type="text"/>
Hospital Number:	<input type="text"/>	Date of Birth:	<input type="text"/>

ALTERNATIVES to Forefoot Surgery

Bunions (hallux valgus) and arthritis of the big toe (hallux rigidus) are frequently accompanied by lesser toe changes such as hammer or claw toes and abnormal weight distribution under the lesser toes which can be painful (metatarsalgia). Surgery should only be considered if you have symptoms and have already tried the following measures:

- Footwear modification (lower heels, wider fitting shoes, rocker soles etc.)
- Weight loss (if necessary)
- Insoles or other shoe inserts such as bunion pads
- Simple analgesia (pain killers)

RISKS of Forefoot Surgery

- All operations have risks
- Any underlying medical conditions may worsen due to the operation

COMMON RISKS (occur in up to five in every one hundred forefoot surgeries)

- **Pain** – most surgeries are carried out under a local anaesthetic block (in addition to a general anaesthetic) to minimise the postoperative pain, but you should be prepared to have some pain or discomfort, which usually responds to simple analgesia
- **Swelling** - due to the effects of gravity, feet tend to swell, and this can last several months
- **Scarring** – any type of surgery will leave a scar; occasionally this will be painful and inflamed
- **Minor wound redness** – as with all invasive procedures, there is the risk of infection, and some minor redness of the wound can occur and in some cases the wound edges may not heal fully. In some cases you may require antibiotics to get this to settle. Risks are higher in diabetics, those on immune suppression medication (e.g. steroids or rheumatoid medication) and smokers.
- **Prominent metalwork** – in some cases, the screws or plates can be prominent under the skin, requiring a second procedure to remove them at a later date
- **Numbness** – after surgery you are likely to have some minor numbness and tingling around the scar as the hair-like nerves have been cut
- **Transfer metatarsalgia** – because foot surgery changes the shape of your foot and shifts the balance of load across your toes, pains can appear in areas of the foot that previously did not have pain. Most cases settle with physiotherapy and management with insoles, but further surgery to the lesser toes might be necessary.

LESS COMMON RISKS (occur one in every 100 forefoot surgeries)

- **Blood clots** – because you will be allowed to walk on your heel after the surgery, blood clots are not common, but can occur, and can lead to swelling of the leg (deep vein thrombosis) or chest pain (pulmonary embolism).
- **Delayed bone healing** - this may occur in operations where the bone is cut or fused. Some people heal slower than others and those who smoke are at a greater risk of this occurring. You may have to remain heel weight-bearing for longer or, in some cases, where the bones don't appear to be uniting, require further surgery.

RARE RISKS (occur in less than one in every 100 forefoot surgeries)

- **Deep infection** – Although the operation is performed under sterile conditions and all precautions are taken to prevent this, infection can happen, and if the wound does not settle on antibiotics, you may require a further operation to remove the metalwork and clear the infection.
- **Intraoperative fracture or broken metalwork**– it is rare that a fracture occurs during surgery or a metal pin or screw breaks. The surgeon will act in your best interests at the time of surgery to give you the best outcome.
- **Complex regional pain syndrome** – this is where the “fight or flight” nerves that supply the foot go on strike and can cause swelling, stiffness, pain, and colour and temperature changes to the foot. Treatment requires counselling and physiotherapy and it could take several months and sometimes longer to improve.
- **Floating toes** – in surgery to the lesser toes, a toe can become floppy or rise up if the supporting structures become loose and this might require further surgery.
- **Nerve injury** – if a larger nerve supplying the toe becomes damaged or caught in scar tissue, it could lead to ongoing pain, numbness and tingling. The sensation usually returns over a period of time, but it can be permanent in some cases.
- **Blood vessel damage** – if the blood supply to a toe is damaged, it could lead to an area of permanent damage where the toe is no longer viable.
- **Death** – whilst this is extremely rare for forefoot surgery, it can occur especially if there are pre-existing medical conditions.

DECLARATION

- I have read and understood this guide to risks of forefoot surgery
- I have asked questions and raised any immediate concerns that I might have
- I understand that another surgeon other than my consultant may perform the operation – they will have adequate training and consultant supervision
- I understand that I will have the opportunity to discuss the details of the anaesthesia with an anaesthetist prior to my surgery

Signature:

Print name:

Date: