

## Your Recovery

You had amputation surgery to remove one or more of your toes. For most people, pain improves within a week after surgery. You may have stitches or sutures. The doctor will probably take these out about 10 days after the surgery. You may need to wear a cast or a special type of shoe for about 2 to 4 weeks.

You may think you have feeling or pain where your toe had been. This is called phantom pain. It is common, and it may come and go for a year or longer. If you have this kind of pain, your doctor may prescribe medicine to treat it.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

## How can you care for yourself at home?

### Activity

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Follow your doctor's instructions about how much weight you can put on your foot and when you can go back to your usual activities. If you were given crutches, use them as directed.
- Try to walk each day if you are able. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent blood clots.
- You may notice some changes in your balance when you walk. Your balance will improve over time.
- Ask your doctor if you should prop up your foot and leg on a pillow when you ice it or anytime you sit or lie down. If your doctor wants you to do this, you can do it for the next 3 days. Try to keep it above the level of your heart. This will help reduce swelling.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.
- You may shower, unless your doctor tells you not to. Keep the bandage dry. If the bandage has been removed, you can wash the area with warm water and soap. Pat the area dry.
- You will probably need to take about 4 weeks off from work or your normal routine. How much time you need to take off depends on the type of work you do and your overall health.

### Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.

- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fibre supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.

### Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. You will also get instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you stopped taking aspirin or some other blood thinner, your doctor will tell you when to start taking it again.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
  - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
  - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.

### Incision care

- Your doctor will probably remove the bandages after several days. Or your doctor may have you remove your bandages at home. Do not touch the surgery area. Keep it dry.
- Do not soak your foot until your doctor says it is okay.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor or nurse advice line (**811** in most provinces and territories) if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

## When should you call for help?

**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have sudden chest pain, are short of breath, or you cough up blood.

**Call your doctor or nurse advice line now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot drink fluids.

- You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.
- You have signs of a blood clot in your leg (called a deep vein thrombosis), such as:
  - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
  - Redness or swelling in your leg.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
  - Red streaks leading from the incision.
  - Pus draining from the incision.
  - A fever.
- You bleed through your bandage.

Watch closely for any changes in your health, and be sure to contact your doctor or nurse advice line if you have any problems.