

Toe Fracture

(Excluding big toe)

This leaflet offers more information on toe fractures. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What is a toe fracture and why have I got one?

A toe fracture is a common injury and usually occurs after stubbing your toe or dropping a heavy object onto your foot. Your toes are made up of small bones called phalanges and a small break can occur in one of these bones after an injury. It usually takes four to six weeks to heal but symptoms can improve much earlier.

What are the signs and symptoms?

A broken toe is painful, tender and swollen. The skin around the area is usually bruised and a collection of blood can form under the toenail. It will be uncomfortable to walk and wearing shoes can be painful. Occasionally if it is a severe break the toe may stick out at an angle.

Do I need any tests to confirm the diagnosis?

Diagnosis can often be made by the history and physical examination, although x-rays are sometimes used to confirm the diagnosis and to guide treatment options.

What treatments are available?

Toe fractures usually heal on their own. Buddy strapping the injured toe to the adjacent uninjured toe may help the pain and make it easier to walk. Occasionally if the fracture is severe, and the bone has broken at an angle, a clinician may need to pull the toe to help realign the bones. If a lot of blood has collected under the toenail, it may need to be drained by making a small hole in the nail or removing the nail.



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What happens if I do not get treatment?

In the rare case of a severe fracture and the bone has broken at an angle, it can lead to long term discomfort and non-union (poor healing) of the bone.

Is there anything I can do to help myself?

In the first few days of injury, regular use of an ice pack and keeping your foot up on cushions when resting can help to improve the swelling. If you used strapping, you should remove this after one week.

Use of over the counter painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen can help with the pain along with wearing comfortable, supportive shoes when walking. You can continue with your regular day to day activities; try to walk as normal but avoid high impact and contact sport for six to eight weeks.

It may take six weeks or longer before your toe returns to normal. New bone will form at the fracture site and the toe may have a prominent lump as a result which can remain for some time.

If your toe becomes cold compared to the rest of the foot, becomes numb or starts tingling you should attend the emergency department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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