

Let's Talk About...

Toe tendon surgery (flexor tenotomy)

Your child may have joint or muscle problems since birth or an injury that causes a curly toe (toe that's constantly bent). These muscle problems can make walking hard and cause poor posture. To correct them, your child may need a toe tendon surgery called **flexor** [FLEX-er] **tenotomy** [ten-OTT-oh-me].

What happens during a flexor tenotomy?

During this outpatient surgery (your child isn't admitted to the hospital), the surgeon cuts (releases) the tendons in the foot that are too tight. Your child can go home the same day. Once you get home, call the Primary Children's Hospital orthopedic clinic at 801.662.5600 to make a follow-up appointment.

When can my child eat after surgery?

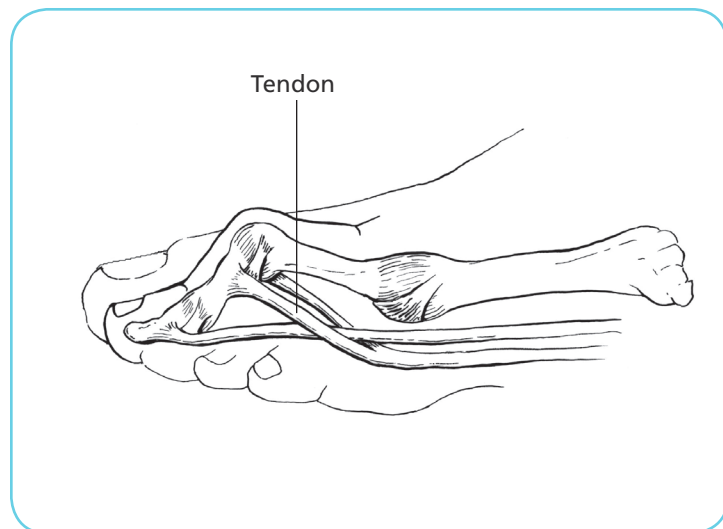
After your child wakes up from surgery, they can drink clear liquids, including water, apple juice, Pedialyte, Gatorade, ice pops, and plain gelatin. Most babies can take a bottle or breastfeed. Your child may have a normal diet after they leave the hospital. Start feeding them soft, easily digested foods, and avoid high-fat or greasy foods like hamburgers and pizza for 24 hours after surgery.

What should I do about nausea and vomiting?

Sedation (medicine to put your child to sleep during surgery), car motion, or pain medicine can make your child feel nauseated (sick to their stomach) or vomit. This can last 24 hours after surgery.

To control nausea:

- Encourage your child to lie still and try not to move.
- Give them clear liquids and slowly start with normal foods until they feel better.



If your child vomits, let their stomach settle for 30 to 60 minutes, and then try clear liquids. It's important for your child to drink plenty of liquids after surgery to avoid dehydration [dee-hi-DRAY-shun], or not enough fluid in the body. However, your child may not eat solid foods for a day or two.

If they vomit all the time or the vomiting continues for several hours, call their healthcare provider.

What are the signs of dehydration?

After surgery, your child may be dehydrated. Signs of dehydration include:

- Dark yellow urine (pee)
- Dry mouth (no spit)
- Chapped lips
- Soft spot on a baby's head sinking in

If you notice any of these signs, give your child more to drink. They should urinate (pee) normally within 24 hours after surgery.

A baby should have 6 to 8 wet diapers in a 24-hour period, and an older child should urinate every 3 to 4 hours.

How can I help my child manage pain?

To help your child manage pain after surgery:

- Raise your child's affected leg on pillows for at least the first 24 hours to limit swelling.
- Have your child wiggle their toes every once in a while.
- Put an ice pack on your child's surgery site for the first 24 to 48 hours to decrease pain and swelling.

Comfort your child and listen to their concerns. An older child can tell you about their pain. A younger or developmentally delayed child in pain may moan, whimper, make a face of pain, cry, be irritable, or not want to eat or sleep.

When should I give my child pain medicine?

Give your child pain medicine as their doctor ordered it. Taking the medicine with food or drink can decrease the chance of nausea.

Your child's doctor may suggest acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for pain. They may also prescribe an oral opioid [OH-pee-oid]. **Some oral opioids have acetaminophen in them, so don't give your child more acetaminophen if they're taking a stronger medicine.**

How should I care for the dressing?

Keep the dressing on your child's foot or leg clean and dry. If your child had hamstring lengthening surgery, they will also have a knee immobilizer (brace). This helps the hamstring heal by keeping the leg straight. Your child's doctor will tell you how often to keep the immobilizer in place. They will also tell you when the dressing can come off.

How much drainage is normal?

A small amount of drainage is normal. It should be thin and pink or clear. If you notice bright-red blood, a lot of drainage, or drainage that is green or lasts more than a couple of days, call your child's doctor.

When can my child take a bath or shower?

Once the dressing is gone, your child may shower as instructed by their doctor. **Your child should not take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or swim for 2 weeks.**

Use a warm washcloth and soap to clean your child's body until they can shower. The Steri-Strips (like butterfly bandages) over your child's surgery site will fall off as the wound heals.

How active can my child be?

Limit your child's activity for the first 24 to 48 hours. They can put weight on their leg or foot as they can handle it. A physical therapist may also teach your child how to use crutches. Your child's surgeon will tell you which sports and gym activities they should avoid for a while.

What is normal behavior after surgery?

It is normal for your child to have behavior changes after surgery. They may wet the bed, suck their thumb, become angry easily, or change their sleep and eating patterns. Comfort your child, help them feel safe, and be patient to help reduce these changes. Call your child's doctor if the behavior changes last longer than 3 to 4 weeks.

How do I contact my child's doctor?

Call the orthopedic office at 801.662.5600 or same-day surgery at 801.662.2855 to reach your child's doctor. If it's after business hours, call the Primary Children's Hospital operator at 801.662.1000 and ask for the on-call orthopedic resident.

Can I prevent curly toes?

You can't always prevent curly toes, but you can make sure your child's shoes fit well and have enough room for their toes to move around. They may need to avoid shoes with pointed toes or high heels.

