The syndesmosis bunionectomy

The 'syndesmosis bunionectomy' is a unique surgical procedure for the correction of bunion deformities. It was pioneered by Daniel Wu, MD from Hong Kong, and does not require cutting or breaking the metatarsal bone as almost all other bunionectomy procedures do. The metatarsal deformity is manually realigned and held in place with ultra-high strength suture while the formation of a ‘new’ ligament between the metatarsals is facilitated with special ‘fishscaling’ techniques of the adjacent metatarsals and application of platelet rich fibrin. This is a concentrated plasma that is taken from your own blood and contains growth factors for ligament formation. While walking is permitted from day one, there are a maximum # of steps per day that are allowed and a reduced rate of walking which are crucial for healing. It is 4-6 months before running or brisk walking for fitness can be done.

This bunionectomy technique not only corrects the deformity with less surgical trauma, but returns the foot back to its 'anatomically normal' form in ways no other procedure involving bone cuts or fusions can.

Significantly less dissection is required and foot swelling is much less than with traditional surgery. Pain after surgery is therefore significantly less than with other bone procedures.

While the syndesmosis bunionectomy procedure allows both feet to be done at one time and allows for immediate walking, certain restrictions will be placed on the patient's walking for 6 months.

Recovery from the syndesmosis procedure

While the syndesmosis bunionectomy procedure is much less invasive than other bunionectomies, you will still be required to progress back to regular walking very slowly. If you overdo it, you will not be happy with the final result of your surgery and complications like stress fractures and bunion recurrence will happen!

For the first week:  Bed rest for 3 days. Your foot should be above your heart for 99% of these first 3 days. You should be doing bicycle kicks every 30 minutes for a whole minute. You can take a few steps with full weight on your foot to get to the bathroom. You should start working on your big toe range of motion exercises as instructed. After three days, you should keep your foot elevated often and walk minimally. No cooking dinner, no house chores, no shopping! From day 4 to day 10 your steps per day should be 300 working up to 1000.

Postop visit #1 after one week:  We will get an x-ray, and change your dressing. We will teach you range of motion exercises on your toe. This is really important! Now you can do 1000 steps per day.

Postop visit #2 after two weeks:  We will remove your dressing, cast your foot in forefoot cast that will stay on for three months, and see how you are doing with your big toe exercises. You should be staying at 1000 steps per day at a slow pace. After two full weeks you can start to progress to 2000 steps per day.

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**Postop visit #3 at one month:** We will check your cast and show you how to remove it. We will allow you to gradually progress to 3000 steps per day at a **slower** pace progressing up to 4000 steps per day by the end of the month.

**Postop visit #4 after two months:** We will evaluate metatarsal and toe position with an x-ray. You are now starting to walk from 4000-5000 steps per day and still using your forefoot cast.

**Postop visit #5 after three months:** A similar evaluation will be made in the clinic. You may add 1000 steps per day to your regimen each week from here on out. You do not need the cast anymore, but should wear only comfort or athletic shoes.

**Postop visit #6 after 4 months:** An x-ray will be taken. You are now allowed to slowly progress to unlimited walking and dressier shoes. All increased must be done gradually.

**Postop visit after 6 months:** You will be fully released to unlimited activities.

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**How much walking after your syndesmosis bunionectomy?**

In order for your surgery to heal correctly, you will need to follow these instructions for walking.

- **The first three days:** Bedrest, with trips to the bathroom only. To the bathroom, you can put full weight on your foot, but keep it flatfooted.
  - **The rest of the first week:** A maximum 500 steps per day (this includes steps with the other foot)
  - **The second week:** A maximum of 1000 steps per day
  - **The third and fourth week:** 2000
  - **The second month:** 3000 gradually going up to 4000
  - **The third month:** 4000 gradually going up to 5000
  - **After the third month:** A maximum of 5000 steps per day.

  The next week you can do a maximum of 6000 steps per day.
  The next week you can do a maximum of 7000 steps per day.
  The next week you can do a maximum of 8000 steps per day and so on........

  After four months, you can think about running...

  - **Steps per day** is measured by a Fit Bit™ or activity monitor and includes steps from **both** feet.
  - Feel free to take less steps than this as your foot will not mind it.
  - A slow pace and flatfooted walk is best for the first couple of months.
  - Always use the **forefoot cast** once you get one.

  **- Doing more:** To walk more than this (after five days):

  After 5 days from the surgery, you could possibly go shopping at the mall (on a scooter), cook a full meal (with an I-walk), or get a cardio workout (on a stationary bike with your heel on the pedal).

  **After your prescribed number of steps per day, if you want to do more, simply:**

  - Use crutches. You will **definitely** want a pair.
  - Use a kneeling scooter. This is great for parks, shopping malls or office situations that are on one floor. You can rent on from (A leg Up) 206 909 6579 and they will deliver it. It’s $40/week.
  - Use an I-Walk™ (a peg leg type attachment). This is great for the kitchen or places where you need your hands. You will need some balance for this one. Amazon has these for $140ish.

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