

After Orthopedic Surgery, ICE, ICE...

ICE...and more ice! Then, take some darvocet and get fresh ice. Theoretically, I knew ice was beneficial to reduce pain and swelling. However, in reality, I had NO IDEA how important it is! Thank goodness, I have an excellent icing system. Designed for continuous compression ice therapy, the packs stay at the proper temperature for 3 to 4 hours. As soon as I take the ice off to change it, I feel my foot starting to swell and hurt. I may keep it frozen numb forever.

That has been my life for the last four days, since I had a bunionectomy. What was I thinking! It seemed like such a good idea to get that nasty bump taken off my foot. It hurt me for 36 years and I was tired of having to buy wide soft shoes, have the shoe repairperson stretch in a bunion pocket and still have pain where it rubbed. However, I did not have a clue what REAL pain was!

Of course, like everything else in my life, it was atypical. The orthopedic surgeon agreed that at first glance, it looked like a bunion but, looking at the foot and the x-rays, it was apparent that the bones were all straight. Therefore, the bunion had not formed in the usual way. It was also higher on the toe, which is why the bunion pocket the shoemaker put in my shoe was never quite in the right place.

I explained that the bump had appeared when I was 16. At that time, it got very inflamed and painful and after several months, it opened and drained pus. However, it never went away. Several times since, it became inflamed and broke open again but it still never went away. We decided that it started with an injury. That makes sense. I was a farm kid. Things dropped on my feet and my horses stepped on me all the time.

It still was a bunionectomy because there is no insurance billing code number for "removing an unusual bump from where a bunion would be if one had a bunion". However, he would not have to cut any other bones or ligaments to do any straightening; just remove the bump.

Therefore, the doctor cut off the bump and here I am, propped up in bed with my foot iced and elevated, waiting to take my next darvocet. Sigh!

I will not know for several months if surgery was a good idea or not. I will have to let you know later on. In the meantime, I learned two important things about orthopedic surgery that I would like to share:

1. Take pain medication in the proper dosage and at the intervals stated on the bottle. If you try to be a stoic and take less, or not take the next dose until the pain starts again, you are making a Big Mistake! If the pain level gets out of control, it is hard, very hard, to get it back under control again.
2. ICE, use it! Use real crushed ice only if you have a towel between the pack and your skin. I preferred my "firstice" packs, which will not damage skin, stay the ideal temperature for up to four hours and are flexible enough to mold to the injury and wrap tight against it with an elastic bandage.

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