

# Dawn – Bilateral HTO

## Testimony for Bilateral Higher Tibial Osteotomy (Female, born 1960)



I eventually saw Matt Dawson who requested hip to ankle x-rays ahead of the consultation. He explained the bilateral osteotomy procedure supported by educational literature. He advised that he could perform bilateral arthroscopies at the same time to make the reparation to my knees. To get a positive diagnosis was a total relief and everything made perfect sense. Being self-employed, it suited me to get both legs operated on at the same time and underwent the bilateral osteotomy and arthroscopies on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

I have a high pain threshold but was not prepared for the post op pain. I had to use a zimmer frame for the first 3 days before moving onto 2 crutches. I ran out of Gabapentin after 10 days and it took a while to get the therapeutic pain relief levels back once I received a new prescription. I needed this for around the first 4 weeks. The cryo-cuffs were exceptional to keep the swelling under control.

I started physio on day 5 post op with follow-ups scheduled every 2<sup>nd</sup> week. I used the heel slide, wobble-board and therabands, increasing reps and difficulty as prescribed. I started using the exercise bike at 3 weeks. I did the exercises and stretched myself a little each and every day, finding it difficult to overdo it as the movement was self-limiting.

At 10 days post op, the nurse had difficulty removing the staples (v.painful) and a knot of the stitch beneath my main right scar was too close to the surface for the scar to heal quickly so it was week 5 before I could start swimming.

I suffered a minor complication (small crack) which gave me severe pain in right leg just below the knee. Whilst my left leg pain reduced quickly, my right leg pain caused a limp I was unable to overcome for around 3 months which was when I was ready for work. I had no problem driving at 8 weeks but I found driving distance difficult until around 5.5 months. I moved from 2 crutches to 1 after around 5 weeks and could walk solo after 9 weeks, albeit walking stiffly. I was fortunate to be eligible for 2 weeks in a rehab centre from 10 weeks post op. When I arrived I could barely walk ½ mile but could walk more than 3 miles by the time I left. The hydrotherapy and concentrated balance and core exercises improved my posture, muscle tone and fluency of my walk immensely.

At week 11 I also started 'knocking up' on a squash court once a week, stretching my balance and lunging capability which I have continued to improve building up into games. At 8.5 months post op, I went skiing, coping with mogul fields and getting up to 60mph downhill.

At 14 months post op, I went on an activity holiday, enjoying tennis, water-skiing, sailing and other keep fit classes and I'm amazed at the improvement in the quality of my life since the operation with further improvements to enjoy when the plates and screws are removed.

As at today, I cannot kneel down due to the pain and discomfort of the screws and find that the screws and plates limit my running capability. I recently had a sharp pain in my left knee relating to my medial but have been assured that this is common at this stage of recovery and it is to do with the proximity of the plate and screws which will be resolved on removal of all the hardware later this year.

For anyone making the decision on whether to opt for this procedure, I cannot praise the procedure enough. I have met people since my operation (with legs a similar shape to how mine used to be) who have had knee replacements in the last 2 years. They have both suffered from reduced flexibility, one of them not truly eliminating their pain and cannot expect further improvement and their legs are still bowed.

The post operation exercises require hard work and dedication - no-one else can do it for you. Even now after 15 months - there is positive improvement with more to come. The short term pain is well worth the gain!