

Bunion

Podiatry Service



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What is a bunion?

When your big toe is angled towards the second toe, the deformity is called a bunion (hallux valgus). This causes a bump on the side at the base of the big toe. In addition there is often thickening of the skin and tissues next to the affected joint. The thickened skin and tissues may become inflamed, swollen and painful. Sometimes a fluid-filled sac (bursa) develops over the joint.



What symptoms and problems are caused by bunions?

- Pain: You may then have difficulty walking due to pain.
- Inflammation and swelling at the base of the toe.
- The foot may become so wide that it can be difficult to find wide enough shoes.
- You may get arthritis in the big toe.
- The second toe can become deformed.
- In severe cases, the big toe can push your second toe up out of place.

What is the treatment for bunions?

Good footwear is often all that is needed

Wearing good footwear does not cure the deformity but may ease symptoms of pain and discomfort. Ideally, get footwear advice from a person qualified to diagnose and treat foot disorders.

Wider and deeper footwear can accommodate deformity and prevent rubbing over the prominent area.

Conservative management

Bunion protectors and toe spacers can help protect the area. Insoles can support the foot/toe joint and reduce pressure over the joint. Night splints can help reduce deformity and are effective in early management of bunions.

Medication

Painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen may ease any pain. If the bunion (hallux valgus) develops as part of an arthritis then other medication may be advised.

Surgery

An operation may be advised if pain is severe and a change of footwear does not ease symptoms. The aim of the operation is to straighten the joint as much as possible and relieve pain. It is not usually done just to improve appearance.

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