
Bunion

Introduction

The purpose of this leaflet is to provide you with some general advice and information about how to manage your foot pain. You may be sent this leaflet while waiting for your physiotherapy appointment.

What is a bunion?

A bunion is a deformity of the base of joint of the big toe where the joint deviates sideways towards the second toe. The medical name for bunions is hallux valgus.

With a "Hallux Valgus" bunion, the big toe gradually leans toward the second toe, rather than pointing straight ahead. This throws the bones out of alignment, producing the bunion's "bump". A tailor's bunion, also called a 'bunionette', is a bony lump that forms along the side of the little toe. It happens when the fifth metatarsal bone enlarges or shifts outward.

Bunions usually appear at a late stage; some people never have symptoms of pain but notice the change in foot shape. Bunions are most often caused by an inherited faulty mechanical structure of the foot.



There are various types of severity of bunion depending on the amount of deviation towards the 2nd toe.



What causes it?

In many cases it is not clear why a bunion deformity develops:-

- There may be some genetic (hereditary) tendency to have some weakness of this joint which leads to the deformity developing.
- In some cases it can be due to other joint problems like osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis.
- Wearing shoes which are the wrong shape (i.e. pointed toes which are too narrow) tends to make the problem worse as extra pressure is put on the big toe joint and other toes and causes compression as well as friction on the skin covering the joint or the tops of the toes.

What kind of Symptoms do you feel?

- Symptoms occur most often when wearing shoes that crowd the toes – shoes with a tight toe box or high heels.
 - In addition, spending long periods of time on your feet can aggravate the symptoms of bunions.
 - Symptoms which occur at the site of the bunion may include:
 - Pain or soreness
 - Inflammation and redness
 - A burning sensation
 - Perhaps some numbness
 - Other conditions which may appear with bunions include calluses on the big toes, sores between the toes, ingrown toenail and restricted motion of the toe (hallux limitus/rigidus) (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/bunions/>).
 - Having other foot problems which may appear with bunions include – conditions such as flat feet (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/flat-feet/>) calluses on the big toes, sores between the toes, ingrown toenail www.versusarthritis.org Foot Pain Information Booklet – versus arthritis.
 - Restricted motion of the toe (hallux limitus / rigidus). www.foothealthfacts.org – hallux rigidus foot health facts.
 - High arches or hammer toes (<https://www.arthritisresearchuk.org/arthritis-information/conditions/hammer-toes.aspx>)
-

General Advice

Many of the problems above can be helped by addressing the factors below:

What is the initial treatment for a bunion?

You need to change your footwear:

- Go for wider, deeper shoes with a fastening in a soft leather or a material without stitching or seams.
- A wider, deeper shoe will limit pressure on the skin overlying the bunion and the second toe which can cause pain and inflammation as well as callus and corns.
- Shoes with an adjustable fastening, such as a lace, buckle or Velcro strap to allow for width across the forefoot and also hold the shoe in place.
- Avoid slip-on shoes and high heels because they have to be tighter to stay on the feet. With nothing to hold the foot in place, the toes often slide to the end of the shoe where they are exposed to pressure. There should be a centimetre between the end of the longest toe and the end of the shoe.
- High heels throw more weight onto the ball of the foot, putting the toes under further pressure and onto uncomfortable joints.
- If it is essential to wear smart dress shoes, for example dress code for work – consider wearing wider, deeper shoes outside work hours, such as trainers. This should help to reduce any discomfort you are experiencing with the bunion.



Other treatments include:

- **Insoles / orthotics** - research to date has shown that **foot orthoses**, an insole which supports and influences the mechanics of the foot, **do not stop bunions from getting worse**. However, they may prevent bunions from forming in the first place.
- **Padding** - using materials such as fleecy web, fleecy foam, felt or gel bunion covers can help protect the skin and joints from footwear friction/rubbing caused by the footwear.
- **Splinting** - some research recommends the use of night splints for children with the objective of stabilizing the deformity.



- **Surgery** – Surgery is an option if having tried all conservative measures these have failed to provide adequate pain relief and the deformity is affecting functional activity then an Orthopaedic opinion with regards to surgical intervention is a possible consideration. See the link to the British Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society (BOFAS) below.

Find a Pharmacy for advice on pain relief see (<https://beta.nhs.uk/find-a-pharmacy/>)

Further information

British Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society (BOFAS) www.bofas.org.uk

This offers a list of all surgeons carrying out specialist foot and ankle surgery across the UK as well as patient information.

Arthritis Research UK www.arthritisresearchuk.org Phone: **0300 790 0400**

This offers a wide range of information and articles as well as a selection of self-help booklets which can be downloaded on the Internet.

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) www.nras.org.uk Phone: **0845 458 3969** Helpline: **0800 298 7650** Email: enquires@nras.org.uk

This provides information and support for people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), their families, friends and carers.

Other useful links

www.walktall.co.uk

www.cosyfeet.co.uk

www.diabetes.org.uk

If the above measures are not sufficient to control your symptoms it may be appropriate to refer you on to a foot and ankle specialist/surgeon in secondary care for an orthopaedic opinion

Going forward

If, having followed the advice given for 3-4 weeks, your symptoms fail to improve or if your symptoms deteriorate contact us to book an appointment.

For further information

Please ring on 0191 2138800 or visit our website at: www.tims.nhs.uk which provides online guidance and support on managing your musculoskeletal (MSK) condition effectively.

The NHS website also provides trusted online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare to help you manage your condition and/or inform your choices about your health:

www.nhs.net

Useful links

The patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can offer on-the-spot advice and information and the NHS. You can contact them on Freephone **0800 032 02 02** or email northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk



Tyneside Integrated Musculoskeletal Service

TIMS is a partnership between Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust