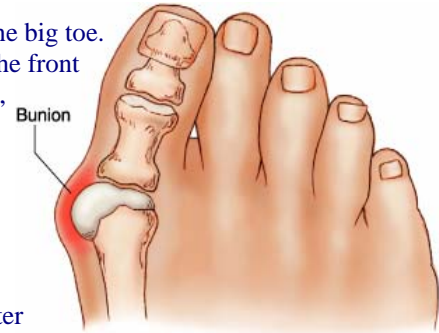


Bunions

What is a Bunion?

Bunions (hallux valgus) are often described as a bump on the side of the big toe. The visible bump actually reflects changes in the bony framework of the front part of the foot. With a bunion, the big toe leans toward the second toe, rather than pointing straight ahead. This throws the bones out of alignment, producing the bunion's "bump."



Bunions are a progressive disorder. They begin with a leaning of the big toe, gradually changing the angle of the bones over the years and slowly producing the characteristic bump, which continues to become increasingly prominent. Usually the symptoms of bunions appear at later stages, although some people never have symptoms.

What Causes a Bunion?

Bunions most commonly affect women. Some studies report that bunions occur nearly 10 times more frequently in women than men. It has been suggested that tight-fitting shoes, especially high-heel and narrow-toed, might increase the risk for bunion formation. Bunions are reported to be more prevalent in people who wear shoes than in barefoot people. There also seem to be inherited (genetic) factors that predispose to the development of bunions, especially when they occur in younger individuals.

Other risk factors for the development of bunions include congenital (present from birth) abnormal formation of the bones of the foot, nerve conditions that affect the foot, rheumatoid arthritis, and injury to the foot.

Symptoms

- Pain, soreness, numbness or burning sensation
- Inflammation and redness

Diagnosis

Bunions are readily apparent, you can see the prominence at the base of the big toe or side of the foot. However, to fully evaluate your condition, the foot and ankle surgeon may take x-rays to determine the degree of the deformity and assess the changes that have occurred.

Treatment

Early treatments are aimed at easing the pain of bunions, but they won't reverse the deformity itself. These options include:

- **Changes in shoe wear.** Choose shoes that have a wide toe box and forgo those with pointed toes or high heels which may aggravate the condition.
- **Padding.** Pads placed over the area of the bunion can help minimize pain.
- **Activity modifications.** Avoid activity that causes bunion pain, including standing for long periods of time.
- **Medications.** Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may help to relieve pain.
- **Icing.** Applying an ice pack several times a day helps reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Injection therapy.** Injections of corticosteroids may be useful in treating the inflamed bursa (fluid-filled sac located in a joint) sometimes seen with bunions.

- **Orthotic devices.**

When is Surgery Needed?

When the pain of a bunion interferes with daily activities, it's time to discuss surgery.