



BUNION

(Hallux Valgus)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A bony swelling or bump that occurs along the side of the big toe joint. Bunions may start in the teenage years, but usually occur in the 20 to 30 age group. Three times as many women as men have bunions.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- A big toe that points in, toward the other toes. This is called hallux valgus.
- Thickened skin over the bony bump at the base of the big toe.
- Fluid may build up under the thickened skin.
- Foot pain and stiffness.
- The symptoms progress slowly over a period of years.

CAUSES

The big toe has been forced into an incorrect position. This causes the joint to stick out. The big toe may overlap one or more of the other toes.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Family history of foot problems (inherited weakness in the toe joints).
- Flat feet.
- Arthritis.
- Shoes that have high heels and narrow toes that push the toes together.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Exercise daily to keep muscles of the feet and legs in good condition.
- Wear shoes that have wide toes and fit well. Don't wear high heels or shoes without room for toes in their normal position.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

A bunion is permanent unless surgery is performed to remove it. Self-care can help improve the symptoms.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Infection of the bunion, especially in persons with diabetes mellitus.
- Inflammation and arthritis in other joints caused by difficulty in walking. Arthritis can result from abnormal stress on the foot, hip, and spine.

- Bunion may grow back after surgery.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider can diagnose a bunion by its appearance. An X-ray of the toe joint may be done.
- Treatment usually involves self-care steps and surgery, if needed.
- Wear comfortable shoes that fit well.
- If there is swelling, redness, and pain, keep pressure off the affected toe.
- Before bedtime, separate the first toe from the others with a foam-rubber pad.
- Wear a thick, ring-shaped pad around and over the bunion. Use arch supports to relieve pressure on the bunion. These are available in drugstores or shoe-repair shops.
- Custom-made orthotics (shoe inserts) may be prescribed.
- Surgery (bunionectomy) may be recommended when bunion makes walking painful.

The bunion is removed and the toe may be straightened. Specific instructions will be provided for self-care after surgery.

MEDICATIONS

Use nonprescription drugs such as aspirin or ibuprofen for pain, swelling, and soreness.

ACTIVITY

If you have surgery, resume your normal activities slowly after surgery. Recovery may take 2 months or more.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has a bunion that is interfering with normal activities.
- You develop signs of infection after treatment or surgery. Signs of infection include fever, tenderness, or pain.