



HALLUX VALGUS (BUNION)

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some understanding of the problems you may have with your big toe and what you can do to help.

1. What is a bunion?

A bunion is a deformity of the base of joint of the big toe where the joint develops a sideways angle. The medical name for bunions is hallux valgus. The problem is usually categorised as mild, moderate or severe. Click on the website picture of a bunion for more information on the categorisation.

Due to the joint deformity the bones of the big toe are pushed towards the smaller toes. The skin over the bunion can rub on the inside of your shoes. This may cause thickening and inflammation of the skin and tissues over the big toe joint. The thickened skin may become hot swollen and painful. Sometimes a fluid filled pocket (bursa) develops over the joint and can also become inflamed.

2. What causes a bunion?

In many cases it is not clear why a bunion deformity develops. There may 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 cause friction on the skin covering the joint or the tops of the toes.

3. What can I do about it?

One of the most important things you can do to help is to wear shoes which fit well. You should try to wear flat, wide-fitting shoes with plenty of room for your toes (e.g. wider fit shoes website below). Click the General Footwear Advice link on the website for further details. Shoes which fasten with laces or adjustable strap are best. Avoid high-heeled shoes with pointed toes. Also avoid shoes which are not wide enough to fit well across the widest part of your foot (across the bunion). To reduce rubbing on the big toe joint you may also want to use a bunion pad over the bunion. Similar padding is available to protect your other toes which usually can be bought from an online supplier or local chemist.

To manage any bunion pain or inflammation you can take over-the-counter medication such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. If in doubt please discuss this with your pharmacist or GP.

None of these treatments will cure a bunion but they may help reduce secondary problems such as crowding of your toes or breakdown of your skin due to pressure from shoes

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

In the first instance you should give these first line treatments at least six to 12 weeks to have an effect. If you are noticing improvement, you should continue these treatments until the symptoms are manageable. If they do not improve then self-refer to your local

Information for Patients:

NHS Borders Podiatry clinic using the online self-referral form on this website which is also available in paper form at your local health centre.

Bunion Surgery

If these suggested treatments do not help and your bunion continues to be painful you may be referred to an orthopaedic clinic to be considered for an operation. An operation will not return your foot to normal but it can change the shape of your foot and help reduce symptoms.

Bunion surgery should only be considered after all other treatments have been tried for **at least 3 months**. The recovery time after a bunion operation can be several months with no putting weight on the foot for the first 6 weeks. Please note you may not be seen by a surgeon at your first clinic appointment. Please see our separate leaflet on bunion surgery for more details on procedures, recovery timescales, and possible complications of surgery.

Other information:

Shoes, bunion shields etc:

Wider Fit Shoes: www.widerfitshoes.co.uk Tel: 01933 311077

Algeos: <http://www.valleo.com/> Tel: 0151 280 5555

Healthystep: <http://www.healthystep.co.uk/collections/bunions> Tel: 01457 839549

Simply Feet Tel: <http://www.simplyfeet.co.uk/index.php/footcare/gel-cushioning/bunion-cushioning.html> Tel: 0845 3700380

Health and Wellbeing Information:

NHS Inform: Tel: 0800 224488 <https://www.nhsinform.scot/injuries/muscle-bone-and-joint-injuries>

Health and Wellbeing advice/support www.smallchangesbigdifference.org Tel: 0800 224488