

HALLUX RIGIDUS (STIFF/PAINFUL BIG TOE)



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.

What is a Hallux Rigidus?

Hallux rigidus is osteoarthritis (wear and tear) of the joint at the base of the big toe. The condition can be due to minor injury of the joint like repeated stubbing of the toe or start more gradually from wear and tear of the joint. Symptoms can include:

- Pain on movement of your big toe, for example when walking, standing or climbing stairs
- Limited movement of the big toe joint due to pain and stiffness
- An enlarged big toe joint which can rub on shoes which are too narrow
- Increased pain on wearing shoes with higher heels or which have flexible soles?

In many cases it is not clear why hallux rigidus develops. It can be due to:

- Injury
- Overuse, for example jobs that involve a lot of kneeling or squatting, certain sports e.g. football
- Secondary to conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or gout
- Altered foot function

What can I do about it?

One of the most important things you can do to help is to wear the right shoes. You should try to wear flat, well fitting shoes with plenty of room for your toes. Please see our simple guide on shoe and slipper fitting. Shoes 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 big toe joint). Avoid shoes with flexible soles. Shoes with stiffer, inflexible soles which are slightly rocker shaped across the forefoot can limit bending of the joint during walking and reduce painful symptoms (see picture).



To reduce rubbing on the big toe joint you may also want to use a bunion pad over the enlarged joint which usually can be bought from an online supplier or local chemist.

To manage any joint 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. A special insole may reduce the bending of the joint and relieve symptoms - see links on reverse of this leaflet.

None of these treatments will cure hallux rigidus but they may help manage the problem.

Information for Patients:

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 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.

Hallux Rigidus Surgery

If these suggested treatments do not help and your big toe joint continues to be painful you may be referred to an orthopaedic clinic to be considered for an operation. An operation will fuse your big toe joint surgically which may improve your symptoms. It is important to note that you will be unable to bend the toe after surgery.

Hallux rigidus should only be considered after all other treatments have been tried for **at least 3 months**. The recovery time after the 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 (by clicking on the link on the website) on Hallux Rigidus 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