

Patient Information on Bunions

This is an information leaflet to support you with your bunions condition

Bunions are a common foot deformity, often described as a large painful bump on the side of the big or little toe.



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.

Symptoms

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).

Treatment

Early treatments are aimed at easing the pain of bunions but they won't reverse the deformity itself.

Changes in Footwear: wearing the right kind of shoes is very important. Choose shoes with appropriate fastenings and that have a wide toe box and avoid 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 by deflecting rubbing and friction from the joint. You can purchase bunion pads at any chemist.



Big toe night splints: help stretch tight tendons and muscles around the joint while you sleep. There is poor evidence for its effectiveness. Not recommended for those with diabetes and compromised circulation.



Activity modifications: avoid activity that causes bunion pain, including standing for long periods of time.

Orthoses: Orthotic devices can be purchased at larger pharmacies, retailers and online. These will not cure a bunion but can relieve pressure on the joint.



Exercises for bunions

There is no evidence to suggest that exercises can prevent further deformity; however some patients have found the following helpful:

The following exercises are a random selection from patient self-help websites which individuals have found beneficial. However, there is no written evidence to prove any are effective:

- 1) Grasp the big toe with one hand and do some yoga like stretches on the joint in all directions. Hold the position at the end range of motion without causing pain for 10 to 15 seconds. Repeat.
- 2) There are specialist devices that loop around the big toe to provide stretching. Spread your feet so that the toe is 'straightened' – hold for several minutes. Repeat several times.



Contact Details

You can contact the Podiatry Service on Tel: 0191 4458401

Data Protection

Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to be shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible.

In order to assist us to improve the services available, your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews and Statistics.

Further information is available via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website (<https://www.qegateshead.nhs.uk/fairprocessing>) or by contacting the Data Protection Officer by telephone on 0191 445 8418 or by email ghnt.ig.team@nhs.net.

This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats upon request

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