

Bunions

Information for patients

What is a bunion?

A bunion is a bony lump that forms on the inside of the foot at the base of the big toe. The big toe starts to move over towards the little toe causing the first metatarsal bone to protrude.

Some people may develop a large sac of fluid (a bursa) over the protruding joint. This can often become inflamed and sore.

What causes a bunion?

Bunions are usually caused by a defective mechanical structure of the foot. Our foot type is inherited and certain foot types are more prone to developing bunions. Feet which have a short first metatarsal and those which excessively collapse in when walking (also called being flat-footed) are most at risk of developing bunions.

Footwear

Shoes do not cause bunions, but can make the condition worse, exacerbate the pain and increase the deformity of the joint. If shoes are too narrow at the toe it can put extra pressure on the bunion and push the toes closer together. Wearing shoes with a high heel will also lead to greater pressure being exerted through the big toe joint. Slip on shoes can cause the toes to be pushed towards the end of the shoe, creating more pressure on the toes.

The symptoms of a bunion can be managed best by wearing lace up and strap-on shoes which have enough space to avoid squashing your feet, but not so much space that your feet move and slide around.

How are bunions treated?

The best treatment for bunions is to wear wider and deeper shoes with an adjustable strap or lace. Very often just reducing the pressure on the joint is enough to reduce painful symptoms.

Shoes with a firmer, stiffer sole can also help.

If your feet roll inwards excessively when you walk this can exacerbate the problem. Try wearing an 'anti-pronatory' insole to reduce the pressure on the big toe joint.

Surgery is not always needed for bunions, however for severe cases this may be the only option. However, there are risks and complications with any type of surgery, so this is not usually advised unless your bunions are causing a lot of pain or if they start to deform your other toes.

Podiatry Services
City of Coventry Health Centre
2 Stoney Stanton Road
Coventry
CV1 4FS
Telephone: 024 7696 1335

If you require this document in a different format or language, please contact the Trust's Equality and Diversity Department on 024 7653 6802