

Bunions (Hallux Valgus)

What are bunions?

Bunions (also known as Hallux Valgus) refer to an enlargement of the inside of the big toe joint, with movement of the big toe towards the second.

What causes bunions?

It is not known exactly what causes bunions, but wearing badly fitting shoes can make the condition worse. Bunions can run in families and are more likely to develop if you have a very flexible foot or short big toe joint.

Will they get worse?

Unfortunately, there is no way of predicting how much a bunion will develop. Some people may develop very small and painful bunions whilst others may have very large, pain-free bunions. Treatment is guided by pain rather than cosmetic appearance.

What can be done?

Often the symptoms associated with bunions can be self-managed.

Pain relief

You can take over the counter painkillers e.g. paracetamol and ibuprofen if the pain is bad and interfering with your daily activities. You should discuss this with your pharmacist or GP first.

Some people find that rubbing a cream or gel that contains an anti-inflammatory medication onto the swollen joint helpful.

Footwear

Good fitting footwear is often all that is needed. Wearing shoes that are excessively high or narrow may aggravate bunion joints.

- Wear shoes, trainers, slippers or sandals that accommodate the bunion



- Don't wear high heeled, pointed or tight shoes
- It is better to have an adjustable fastening shoe. Many people have found a lace-up walking shoe with the bottom eyelets uncrossed has provided good pain relief.
- Try bunion pads which are soft pads you can put in your shoes to stop them rubbing. You can buy these at your pharmacy.

Treatments

Various treatments have been cited as being beneficial for bunions including splints, foot orthoses, padding and toe spacers. Your health care professional can advise you whether any such interventions may be of benefit to you. These treatments may not improve the appearance of the deformity but may provide symptom relief.

Try to lose weight if you are overweight.

Surgery

Surgery is usually a last resort when all conservative measures have failed, as there is a small chance that it may not improve the condition or indeed make it worse. For this reason, in the NHS, bunion surgery is rarely performed for cosmetic purposes.

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If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm or email lch.pet@nhs.net

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