

# BUNIONS



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- Bunion comes from the Greek word for turnip!
- The bump of a bunion typically looks red and swollen, like a turnip.
- Medically a bunion is known as a hallux (big toe) valgus ('knock-kneed') deformity.



# WHAT IS A BUNION (HALLUX VALGUS) DEFORMITY?

- A change in the alignment of the bones of the foot caused by pressure on the foot over a long period of time.
- The soft tissues around the big toe eventually get stretched out on one side of the joint and tight on the other.
- This causes the toe to become crooked and produce a bump (bunion) on the inside.



TURNING UNDER  
OF  
BIG TOE

# WHY DO BUNIONS HURT?

- The bump on the inside rubs on footwear.
- More pressure gets put on the bottom of the forefoot under the other toes.
- The other toes start to go crooked as well and rub on each other.



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# DO BUNIONS GET BETTER?

- Bunions often get worse over time but quite slowly.
- Nothing will fix the deformities or prevent progression (tape, braces, spacers, orthotics).
  - These things can make them less painful, however.
- You can't 'fix' feet to prevent bunions.



# WHO GETS BUNIONS?

- Men can get bunions but they are more common in women.
  - Why? Shape of foot, physiological differences, shoe styles.
  - Some inflammatory conditions can also make the foot more prone to developing deformities.



# WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF BUNIONS?

- Pain
- Inflammation and redness
- Calluses
- Burning sensation/numbness
  - Symptoms can be worse if improper footwear is worn or if long periods of time are spent on your feet.



# HOW IS A BUNION DIAGNOSED?

- The deformity is quite obvious to see.
- If the toe is straight and you have pain it is probably arthritis and not a bunion.
- The severity of the bunion is based on how it looks and also how crooked the bones are underneath (x-ray).





# HOW ARE BUNIONS TREATED?

- Bunions in most cases **do not** require surgery.
- A deformity without pain definitely doesn't require surgery.
  - This is because we can't always make a foot straight with surgery.
- There are a variety of non-operative interventions that may be of benefit.



# NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT

- Changes to footwear
  - Wearing the right type of shoes is very important.
  - You want to wear shoes with **low heels, laces and large toe boxes.**
  - This keeps your foot from sliding forward in the shoe and minimizes the pressure on the toes.



# NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT

- Spacers or soft splints can take the pressure off of the painful area.
- Orthotics can also tilt your heel to reduce the deformity or have pads built in to decrease the pressures under the forefoot.



# NON-SURGICAL TREATMENT

- Activity modification such as reducing the time on your feet or reducing the amount of walking you do may help reduce the irritation in the short term.
- Ice and anti-inflammatories may also help break the cycle of inflammation.



# SURGICAL TREATMENT

- Surgery for bunions is done **only** if nonsurgical treatments do not work!
- It should not be done just to make things straight because surgery isn't very good at doing that.
- It should mainly be done for **pain**, although sometimes deformities can be so severe they should be corrected to let people wear normal shoes.



# SURGICAL TREATMENT

- Be aware:
  - Surgery involves cutting the bones of the foot.
  - Although not considered major surgery, it is still quite painful afterwards.
  - You still might not be able to wear the shoes you want.
  - Your foot will be swollen for 6 months.
  - It might go crooked again afterwards.



# WHEN SHOULD SURGERY BE DONE?

- When foot pain consistently interferes with your daily activities.
- When non-operative options don't help.
- When your big toe starts to cross over your other toes.
- When you can't find shoes to fit your foot.



# WHAT DOES SURGERY ACTUALLY DO?

- It realigns the foot bones to take the pressure off of the inside of the forefoot.
- This is done by cutting bones, pointing them in different directions and fixing them in place with screws or plates.
- Soft tissues like ligaments and capsules are also tightened or loosened as required to straighten things.
- Sometimes things are too crooked and we need to fix the joint with a plate so it doesn't move anymore (fusion).







# WHAT IS RECOVERY FROM BUNION SURGERY LIKE?

- Most bunion surgeries are day surgeries. You don't stay in the hospital.
- You will have a removable cast or post-op sandal for 6-8 weeks.
- If it is your right foot, you can't drive for 2 months.



# WHAT IS RECOVERY FROM BUNION SURGERY LIKE?

- Return to work: for desk jobs? 2-6 weeks. Physical labour jobs? 3 months to full duties.
- Return to sports: 3-6 months depending on the sport. If you are high-level athlete, surgery may end your ability to compete.



# WHAT ARE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF SURGERY?

- Infection
- Nerve Injury (just localized numbness)
- Failure of the bone to heal (non-union)
- Stiffness of the big toe joint
- Continued pain
- Painful hardware (which can be removed later)
- Recurrence of the bunion



# REFERENCES

- American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
- American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons
- Footeducation.com
- Orthogate ([www.orthogate.org](http://www.orthogate.org))

