

# Bunions (Bunionettes)

## Definition

Bunions, referred to in the medical community as Hallux Valgus, are one of the most common forefoot problems. A bunion is a prominent bump on the inside of the foot around the big toe joint. This bump is actually a bone protruding towards the inside of the foot. With the continued movement of the big toe towards the smaller toes, it is common to find the big toe resting under or over the second toe. This causes a common forefoot condition called overlapping toes. Some of the symptoms of bunions include inflammation, swelling, and soreness on the side surface of the big toe. The discomfort commonly causes a patient to walk improperly.

Another type of bunion which some individuals experience is called a Tailor's Bunion, also known as a Bunionette. This forms on the outside of the foot towards the joint at the little toe. It is a smaller bump that forms due to the little toe moving inwards, towards the big toe.

## Cause

Bunions are a common problem experienced mostly by women. The deformity can develop from an abnormality in foot function, or arthritis, but is more commonly caused by wearing improper fitting footwear. Tight, narrow dress shoes with a constrictive toe box (toe area) can cause the foot to begin to take the shape of the shoe, leading to the formation of a bunion. Women who have bunions normally wear dress shoes that are too small for their feet. Their toes are squeezed together in their shoes causing the first metatarsal bone to protrude on the side of the foot.

It is important for men and women to realize that wearing dress shoes and boots, which are tapered in the toe area, can cause the bunion to worsen to the point where surgery is necessary.

## Treatment and Prevention

In the early stages of the formation of a bunion, soaking feet in warm water can provide temporary relief. The best way to alleviate the pain associated with bunions is to wear properly fitting shoes. Shoes designed with a high, wide toe box (toe area) are recommended for people suffering from forefoot disorders, such as bunions. Shoes with rocker soles will unload pressure to the bunion area. Orthotics are also recommended for this condition to provide extra comfort, support, and protection.

Other conservative treatments include using forefoot products designed to accommodate and relieve bunions such as bunion shields, bunion night splints, and bunion bandages. These conservative treatments can limit the progression of the bunion formation, relieve pain and provide a healthy environment for the foot.

If the problem persists, consult your foot doctor.



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