

# BUNION PAIN



## FOOT SMART FOCUS PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

A bunion (also referred to as hallux valgus) is often described as a bump on the side of the great toe. The visible bump reflects changes in the bony framework of the forefoot with the great toe leaning towards the second toe.



### What causes Bunions?

A bunion forms when there is an increased pressure/force placed on the great toe joint. It is important to note, bunions themselves are not hereditary! The foot-type that caused the bunion to develop in the first place however can be passed on.

Bunions are also not solely caused by poorly fitting footwear, however shoes that crowd the toes may make the deformity progress much quicker and symptoms to become more prominent.

### What are the signs & symptoms of a Bunion?

- A bony bump developing on the inside or top of the great toe, which becomes red and swollen
- Joint stiffness (loss of motion); arthritis
- Deep, aching pain inside the joint, made worse by tight fitting footwear
- Mis-shapen 2nd toe (under-riding, over-riding or hammer toes)
- Pain under the 2nd toe joint (often can become the most painful symptom)
- Difficulty fitting shoes
- More common in women

**Early treatment** for bunions is important as they are a progressive foot condition that leads to considerable foot pain and arthritis, difficulty fitting footwear and limitation of activity. The earlier treatment is provided, the more likely conservative treatment will be effective and less likely that surgery will be required.

*More questions? call us or check out our website.*

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Pioneer Podiatry

FOR THE DOCTOR

CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE

## Foot-type / foot posture that causes bunions to develop:

- Flat feet (arch collapse) – placing increased load on the great toe joint
- Joint hypermobility – allowing forefoot/metatarsal arch to easily collapse upon weight-bearing. Most common cause of juvenile hallux valgus.
- Weak intrinsic foot muscles; short first metatarsal
- Footwear – high heels and narrow forefoot causes the toes to be pressed together too much
- Dancing (especially ballet) and other sports or occupations which place increased pressure on forefoot
- Rheumatoid arthritis or gout often affects toe joints
- Trauma to the great toe

## How are Bunions treated?

- Early conservative treatment to reduce the pressure over the bunion and improve forefoot strength
- Improve footwear – avoid shoes with high heels and narrow toe box
- Strengthening exercises – to improve foot strength
- Toe stretches and gentle mobilisations – to improve flexibility
- Bunion splint – worn overnight to help stretch and realign the great toe joint
- Toe separators – separates great toe from second toe, can be worn during the day
- Customised Foot Supports (Orthotics) – to improve biomechanical imbalance and reduce excessive load over great toe joint
- Surgery – conservative treatment is generally most recommended. If conservative treatments fail to relieve the pain and the condition keeps progressing, then surgery may be considered. It is recommended that you continue to wear sensible footwear and Foot Supports to maintain best results, after surgery to address the underlying biomechanical instability that caused the bunion to develop in the first place.



*We have comprehensive Clinical Practice Guidelines on our website for this condition, including videos, more details, and literature references.*