

# Patient information

## Bunions (Hallux Abducto Valgus)

### What are they?

Bunions are bony lumps that form on the sides of your feet. Surgery is the only way to remove them. However, they are not always painful and don't always require treatment.

In most cases the podiatrist or surgeon will not offer treatment if they are not painful.

### Causes

In many cases bunions are inherited.

Footwear (too small, too narrow, too shallow, slip on, the wrong shape for your foot) can make them worse, but there is little research that says that they are to blame.

They can develop at any age.

Some medical conditions can make them worse, for example, Osteoarthritis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Diabetes (foot problems can be more serious for diabetics).

### What can you do, before asking for an appointment to see a Podiatrist?

- Check your footwear. A fastened, well fitting, supportive shoe will reduce bunion discomfort.
- Try taking paracetamol or ibuprofen (ask a pharmacist if you are concerned what to take), or use an anti-inflammatory gel.
- Try to keep it moving. Not using your foot in a normal way, will make the joint stiffen up, making it more painful?
- Try a shop bought insole with an arch support, and / or a metatarsal dome, to be worn in a supportive fastened shoe.
- Gently stretch your calf muscles, a flexible calf muscle will reduce pain in your forefoot.
- See a (registered HPHC) Podiatrist, if you need hard skin reduced or advice on how to manage your bunions.

### What can a Podiatrist Do?

**You can ask for an appointment with a Podiatrist if you have tried the suggestions listed above and your symptoms don't improve or they get worse.**

If you see the Podiatrist, they will check your foot, explain and advise on which treatments are most appropriate for you.

They may suggest a different orthotic, which is a specially made insole that you wear in your shoe or a device to change the position of your toes.

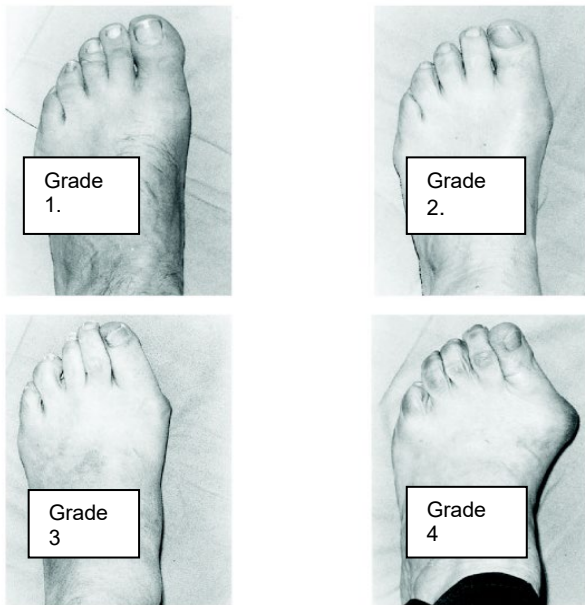
They may discuss exercises that may help.

We may discuss the possibility of an injection to help with distressing pain, although this very often will only relieve pain for a short time, and is not a cure.

Unfortunately, we cannot reduce the size of the bunion, but all these suggestions can reduce pain.

We may also discuss the possibility of surgery.

We use a scale called the Manchester Foot scale to grade bunions; it is unlikely that a surgeon will consider surgery, unless they are graded 4 or worse.



## Bunion surgery explained

If you have tried all the non-surgical options, for example; footwear, anti-inflammatory and or pain killers, toe-spacers, insole management, exercises, and you find no improvement in pain; you may be asked if you would like to consider a surgical option.

The aim of surgery is to straighten the toe, and relieve the discomfort.

You will not be referred for surgery unless you are in significant pain, and it is severely affecting your quality of life.

We will not offer surgery if it is just for cosmetic reasons.

There are several procedures for bunion surgery. The best option depends on the size of the bunion, whether you have any associated arthritis, and how well the surgeon thinks you will recover.

After surgery you will have the foot immobilised (you will be given a surgical shoe to wear) for a minimum of 6 weeks, you may not be able to work and will not be able to drive during this time.

There are risks associated with having surgery, although the chances of these are quite rare. For example, pain, infection, blood clot, nerve damage, mal union (this is when the bone doesn't heal properly and may need further surgery), reoccurrence of the bunion (within 5-15 years).

## Red Flags - It is a good idea to get help if:

- You have developed a high temperature, or you feel hot and shivery.
- If your foot is painful, red hot and swollen
- The bunion has appeared rapidly, and has stopped you doing your daily activities
- If it has been persistently painful for a long time.
- You have an open wound over or around the bunion, due to trauma from footwear, which may happen if you have reduced sensation in your feet, which can occur with medical conditions like diabetes.

## Sources of information (Bunions)

The Health and Care Professions Council. (podiatrists register) [www.hcpc-uk.org](http://www.hcpc-uk.org)

The College of Podiatry. [www.cop.uk](http://www.cop.uk)

Chartered society of Physiotherapy.

British Orthopaedic foot and ankle society.

NHS choices

## Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

**If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.**

**Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:  
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