

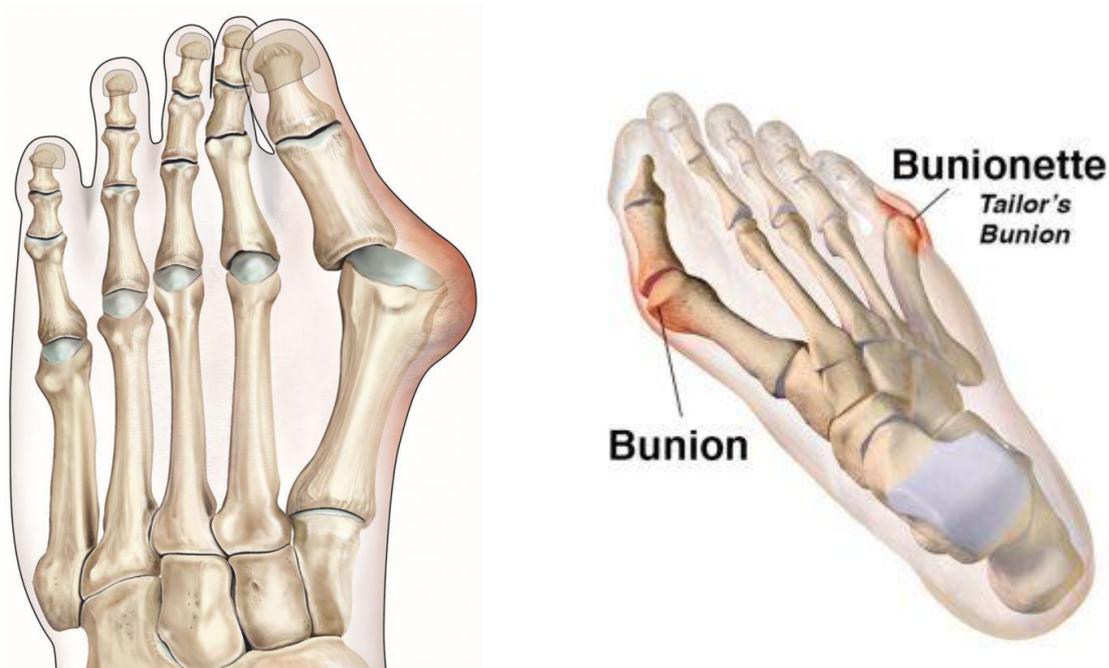
Bunions

What Is a Bunion?

A bunion (medically referred to as hallux valgus) is often described as a bump on the side of the big toe. This is accompanied by outward deviation of the 1st toe. Bunions mainly affect the 1st toe but can affect the little toe as well (then called a bunionette).

The bump is a sign of widening of the bony architecture of the foot.

Bunions are a progressive disorder. They begin with deviation of the big toe, gradually changing the angle of the bones over the years and slowly producing the characteristic bump, which becomes increasingly prominent.



Causes:

Bunions are most often caused by a genetic trait in that the patient may have a bony abnormality of the foot or lax ligaments that cause widening of the foot.

Although wearing shoes that crowd the toes will not actually cause bunions, it sometimes makes the deformity get progressively worse. Symptoms may therefore appear sooner.

Sometimes, severe foot deformities may cause a bunion to get worse. The foot deformity needs to be addressed along with the bunion or there can be a high chance of recurrence.

Symptoms:

Symptoms, which occur at the site of the bunion, may include:

- Pain or soreness
- Inflammation and redness
- A burning sensation
- Possible numbness

Symptoms occur most often when wearing shoes that crowd the toes, such as shoes with a tight toe box or high heels. This may explain why women are more likely to have symptoms than men. In addition, spending long periods of time on your feet can aggravate the symptoms of bunions.

Diagnosis:

Bunions are readily apparent—the prominence is visible at the base of the big toe or side of the foot. However, to fully evaluate the condition, the foot and ankle surgeon may take x-rays to determine the degree of the deformity and assess the changes that have occurred.

Because bunions are progressive, they do not go away and will usually get worse over time. But not all cases are alike—some bunions progress more rapidly than others.

Treatment:

Sometimes observation of the bunion is all that is needed. To reduce the chance of damage to the joint, periodic evaluation and x-rays by your surgeon are advised.

In many other cases, however, some type of treatment is needed. Early treatments are aimed at easing the pain of bunions, but they will not reverse the deformity itself. These include:

- **Changes in footwear.** Wearing the right kind of shoes is very important. Choose shoes that have a wide toe box and forgo those with pointed toes or high heels, which may aggravate the condition.
- **Padding.** Pads placed over the area of the bunion can help minimize pain.
- **Activity modifications.** Avoid activity that causes bunion pain, including standing for long periods of time.
- **Medications.** Oral non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen, may be recommended to reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Icing.** Applying an ice pack several times a day helps reduce inflammation and pain.
- **Orthotic devices.** In some cases, custom orthotic devices such as toe spacers or strapping may assist with the symptoms.
- **Surgery:** If nonsurgical treatments fail to relieve bunion pain and when the pain of a bunion interferes with daily activities, then surgery may be needed. A variety of surgical procedures is available to treat bunions. The procedures

are designed to remove the bump of bone, correct the changes in the bony structure of the foot and correct soft tissue changes that may also have occurred. The goal of surgery is the reduction of pain and deformity.

References:

www.foothealthfacts.org

www.aofas.org

Pictures: Google images