

What are bunions?

Caused by arthritic changes to the big toe and similar to a mild dislocation, bunions are characterized by a bony lump seen at the ball of the foot around the big toe. Often thought to be a growth, it is actually the joint capsule between the first metatarsal bone and the proximal phalanx that causes the lumpy appearance. The deformity causes the big toe to deviate towards the smaller toes and can often cause deformity of the second toe. Occasionally babies may be born with congenital bunions but more commonly, adolescents acquire the deformity gradually.



Common Causes

Bunions are considered hereditary due to the foot type and biomechanics that is passed on from parent to child.

Almost universally, these individuals exhibit excess pronation, a movement that causes the foot to roll inward which unlocks the joints of the foot, causing instability and encouraging the inward movement of the big toe.

Ill fitting shoes such as high heels and tight shoes also causes excess load on the joint, leading to degeneration of the joint and further deformity.

Treatment

Unfortunately, once a bunion occurs there is no way to reduce the size of the lump or correct deformity without surgery.

The risk of developing a bunion or further deformation of the big toe can be greatly reduced with the use of custom foot orthotics that correct abnormal foot movements and help stabilize the joints and posture, preventing excess load on the big toe joint in particular.

General Nail Care

Many patients present for routine nail care due to a lack of mobility. If nails are left to grow, trauma can often result when the nail presses into the end of the shoes which can lead to thickening of the nail, fungal infections and/or ingrown toenails. For prevention it is recommended to have the nails cut by a my FootDr podiatrist every 8-10 weeks.

Prevention is better than a cure

Prevention of bunions is always better than a cure. Early identification of individuals at risk will prevent pain and cosmetic deformity later on in life.

Common Symptoms

Most people will notice the enlargement of the big toe joint occurring slowly over a number of years.

By the time pain occurs at the joint, the bunion is usually of considerable size. Rubbing against the shoes and swelling and stiffness and loss of movement occur and can cause secondary issues to the feet and by extension, the legs and lower back due to changes in posture.



Big toe rotated and pointed toward other toes

For further information on your foot health or to discuss treatment options with a podiatrist, please contact your local my FootDr podiatry centre.