

Hallux valgus

Bunion



Information for patients



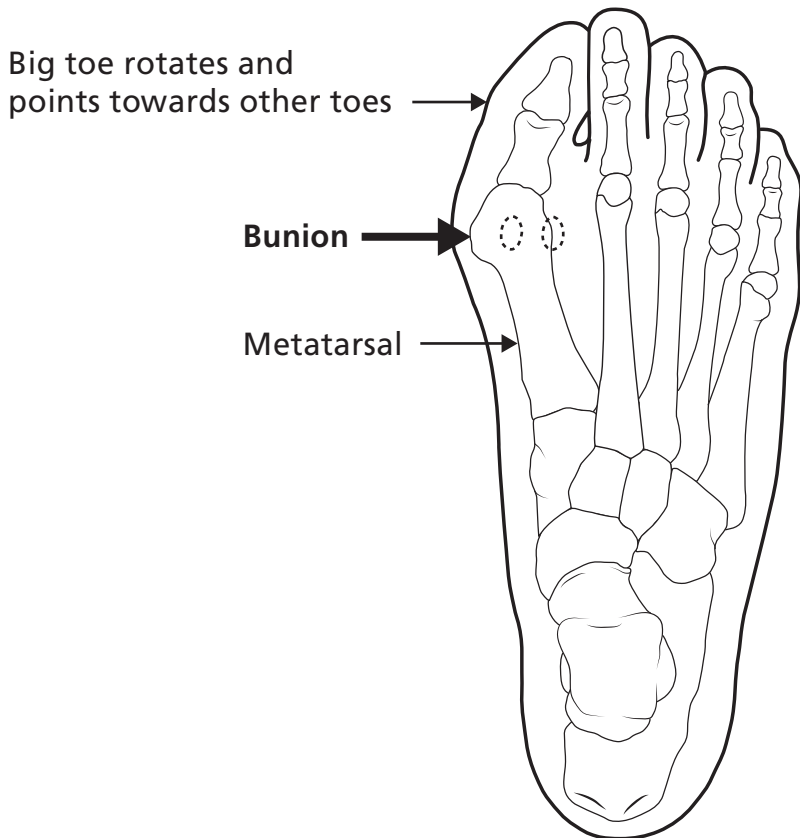
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What is hallux valgus?

The common name for hallux valgus is a bunion. This is a bony deformity at the joint of the base of the big toe. The main feature of hallux valgus will be that the big toe will point towards the other toes on the same foot. This will cause the metatarsal bone to stick outwards and therefore create a change in the shape of your foot. This may be accompanied with pain, swelling and tenderness around the big toe.



What causes hallux valgus?

Even though hallux valgus is very common, the exact cause is not known.

Often it is related to your family history – so there may be a genetic link. Your parents, siblings and relatives may also have this condition. However, if a family member has hallux valgus it does not mean that you will definitely get it.

It is possible that this condition is made worse by, or related to, wearing badly fitting shoes. This condition is rarely found in populations that do not wear shoes. Tight shoes can cause pain and may make the symptoms worse. High heeled shoes force the foot down into the shoe and may also make the condition or symptoms worse.

It may be related to other health conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and gout.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The main features of this condition will be a change in the position and alignment of the big toe. The big toe may point towards the other toes on the same foot. The altered position of the big toe may gradually get worse over time. This may result in the big toe crossing over or under the second toe.

Other symptoms include:

- Pain at the big toe joint.
- An increase in width of the foot across the toes making it difficult to fit or find comfortable footwear.
- The big toe may become much stiffer than normal making it difficult to push up onto your tip toes.
- As the big toe crosses or presses against the second toe it may cause rubbing and soreness between the toes.

- You may notice hard or callused skin developing around the big toe due to its changed position and pressure from footwear.

How is hallux valgus diagnosed?

This condition is diagnosed by your doctor. The diagnosis is made by listening to the symptoms you describe, by examining the shape and movement of your foot and toes.

An X-ray is usually taken to show the exact alignment of the bones in your foot and toes to allow the doctor to examine your big toe joint in more detail. The x-ray will allow the doctor to see the quality and condition of the big toe joint and other joints around it. This will help your doctor decide on the best treatment options for you.

What are the treatment options?

Footwear advice and orthotics

You may find that wearing flatter and wider fitting shoes, and buying shoes with laces or adjustable straps are more comfortable.

You may be referred to the orthotist / podiatrist who can provide you with a device to fit inside your shoe or between your toes to help keep the toe and the foot in a better position. This may help relieve some of your pain and make walking more comfortable. It is important that the orthotic you receive fits well. This may mean that you have to change your footwear to accommodate the orthotic.

Pain killers

You may be encouraged to use pain killers to help control your symptoms. Always discuss the use of painkillers with your doctor or pharmacist and follow the recommended dose.

Surgery

There are a number of surgical options available and the choice of procedure will depend on the precise nature of the problem. Your doctor will have reviewed you and your general health status, The doctor will carefully examined your foot, look at your x-rays and will decide if surgery is the right option for you.

Your doctor will carefully explain the procedure, the associated risks and complications and the expected time of recovery, including the amount of time you may need to take off work.

You will be expected to wear a special protective shoe initially after the operation and you may find that it takes several months to return to all of your normal footwear. You may need to continue to wear wider fitting shoes for some time.

It is important that you understand it can take up to 6-8 months to fully recover from this operation and during this time you may still experience some swelling and pain.

Contact details

Physiotherapy Department

- **0114 271 5799** - Northern General Hospital
- **0114 271 3090** - Royal Hallamshire Hospital

PhysioWorks

- **0114 237 1030** - Then press **1** for NHSPHysioWorks

Orthotic Department

- **0114 271 5807** - Northern General Hospital

Patient Services Team

- **0114 271 2400**
- **sth.pals@nhs.net**



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