

# Bunion

## **What is bunion (Medical term: Hallux Valgus)?**

Bunion is a condition where the big toe deviates towards the 2nd toe leading to a bony bump on the inside of the big toe.

## **What causes bunion?**

Bunions tend to run in families. Women are at a higher risk of developing bunions than men.

## **What are the symptoms?**

In early stages, the condition does not cause any symptoms. As the deformity progresses, patients experience pain over the bony prominence, usually from pressure of the shoe. Often the big toe can rub on the second toe, causing pain. Other symptoms are, pain under the ball of the foot, widening of forefoot and redness/infection over the bony bump

## **What are the treatment options for bunion?**

Asymptomatic bunions may not need any treatment. The first line of treatment in most patients is non-operative. In case of mild deformity, appropriate and wide-fitting shoes and bunion splints help. In very symptomatic cases and where non-operative treatment has not helped surgical correction of the deformity can be carried out.

## **What does the operation involve?**

The aim of surgery is pain relief and toe straightening. Surgery must not be done for cosmetic reasons. The operation is usually performed as a day case procedure. It can be done either under general or a regional anaesthetic (patient is awake with a numb foot).

The operation involves cutting and realigning the bones in the forefoot to narrow the forefoot, excise the bony prominence and straighten the big toe. Metallic screws/staple will be used to hold the realigned bones in position. If additional surgery is required to the second toe then often a K wire is used temporarily (for a period of six weeks) to hold the position. The wound is closed with removable stitches (removed in two weeks after surgery).

## **What is the post-operative recovery?**

You will have a bulky bandage around the foot and will be provided with an offloading shoe and a pair of crutches to help in mobilising for a period of 6 weeks, through which you are allowed to weight bear as able.

In the first few days, elevation of the foot is recommended (above the level of heart) to help reduce the swelling. You will require oral pain killer medications in the first few days to keep the pain under control.

You will be reviewed in clinic or at your GP practice in 2 weeks after surgery to check the operation wound and remove the stitches.

You will then be reviewed at 6 weeks stage in clinic for obtaining an x-ray of your foot to assess the healing and usually start to use your own shoe wear at this stage. You will be encouraged to mobilise your foot and the big toe with gradual return to normal activities and driving depending on your comfort level from there onwards.

In case of left foot surgery, you can start driving an automatic car once the wound has healed. In case of right foot surgery, most individuals can start driving at around 6 to 8 weeks after surgery. Air travel is not recommended within 6 weeks after surgery. Return to an office based job may be possible at around 2 to 4 weeks.

**What are the complications of bunion surgery?**

Bunion surgery has a very high success rate. 80 to 90% of patients are happy with the results of bunion surgery. Potential complications of bunion surgery are:

- Infection
- Clots
- Nerve injury/numbness
- Swelling
- Stiffness
- Pain
- Recurrence
- Chronic pain syndrome