

This document will give you information about bunion surgery. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a bunion?

A bunion is a bony lump on the side of your foot at the base of your big toe (see figure 1).

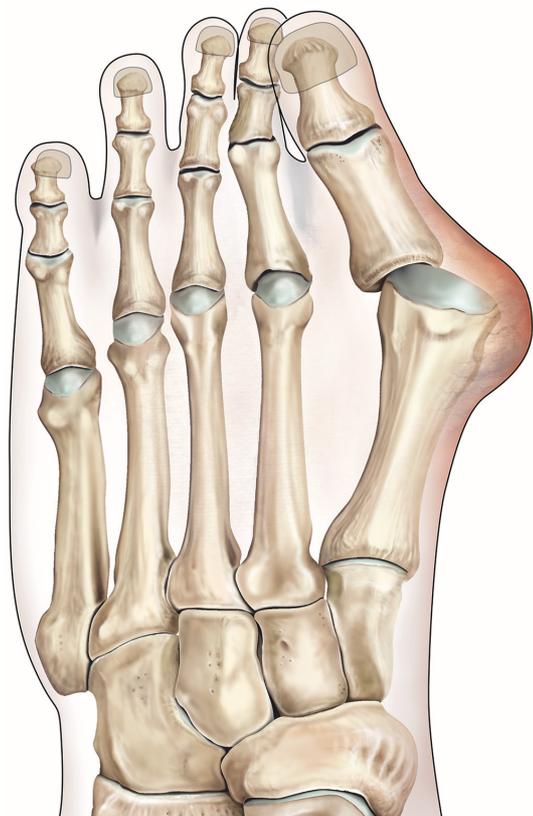


Figure 1
A bunion on the left foot

The most common cause of bunions is footwear that does not have enough width to fit your toes in their natural position. They are sometimes associated with arthritis of the joint at the base of your big toe.

What are the benefits of surgery?

Your big toe should be straighter, so your foot should fit more comfortably in a normal shoe.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Putting padding over the bunion or a spacer between your big toe and second toe can help. Using wide-fitting shoes from a good-quality shoe shop may be enough. If not, the orthotics (surgical appliances) department at the hospital will be able to give you advice about special shoes.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes 30 minutes to an hour. The operation may involve removing the bunion, releasing or tightening ligaments, realigning your big toe, stiffening a joint and straightening your smaller toes.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots
- Difficulty passing urine

2 Specific complications

- Damage to nerves
- Problems with bone healing
- Loss of movement in your big toe
- Severe pain, stiffness and loss of use of your foot (complex regional pain syndrome)
- Pain in the ball of your foot
- The deformity coming back

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

Spend most of the time during the first week with your leg raised so that the swelling settles.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

It can take 6 weeks or longer before the swelling has gone down enough for you to wear a normal soft shoe.

Summary

If you have a bunion that is causing pressure and pain, surgery should straighten your big toe and make your foot fit more comfortably into a normal shoe.

Acknowledgements

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