

A Guide for Patients and Families

# Care of Bunions



# What are Bunions?



A bunion is a foot deformity referring to the bony bump or prominence at the base of the big toe.

It happens when your big toe is angled towards the second toe.

The bunion may be painful or swollen. It may cause problems with footwear which rubs on the skin and soft tissue surrounding the bony bump.

It may also cause subsequent toe deformities to the other toes due to lack of space within the footwear.

## What causes Bunions?

The exact cause of bunion is unknown. It is likely due to numerous factors

- ◆ Abnormal foot structure which is hereditary
  - ◆ Underlying inflammatory joint conditions
  - ◆ Footwear or shoes with narrow or pointed toe box which compresses the toes and results in deviation of the big toe over time
  - ◆ Foot injuries
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## **What are the symptoms and problems that are caused by bunions?**

- ◆ Intermittent or persistent pain, redness and/or swelling
- ◆ Rubbing of toes against one another or against side of footwear  
This can form blisters especially in poorly fitted footwear.
- ◆ Formation of corns and callus
- ◆ Restricted movement of the big toe
- ◆ In severe cases, the big toe can push the lesser toes up or down out of place
- ◆ Difficult to find footwear that can accommodate the bunions

## What can I do?



Wear wide toebox, low heel shoes that have extra space around the big toe to accommodate bunion.



You can perform toe exercises to strengthen and stretch your toes. However, these exercises do not correct the deformities.



Buy proper fitting shoes preferably at the end of the day.

Choose shoes with a wide and deep toe box and a low heel.

Bring your footwear for assessment by our podiatrists.



*Refer to our pamphlet on "Footwear" for more details.*



Take medicine to  
reduce pain



Part of good  
diabetes care, you  
are encouraged to  
have your diabetes,  
cholesterol and  
blood pressure under  
control.

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## What are the types of stretching exercise?

### #1 Toe Stretches



Stretch out your toes to  
keep them flexible and  
this may help to reduce  
foot pain.



Point your toes straight ahead for 5 seconds and then curl them under for another 5 seconds. **Repeat this set 10 times.**

- ◆ This stretch can be useful if you also have hammer toes, or claw toes in addition to a bunion.

**#2**

## **Toe flexing and contracting**



Press your toes against a hard surface or a wall and hold the position for 10 seconds. **Repeat this action 3 to 4 times.**



Flex your toes in the opposite direction and hold the position for 10 seconds. **Repeat this action 3 to 4 times.**

### #3 Resistance exercises



Wrap a towel or belt around your big toe and use it to pull your big toe towards you. At the same time, use your big toe to push forward against the towel.

### #4 Arch roll



Sit down and place a golf ball on the floor under your foot. Roll it around under your foot for 2 minutes.

- ◆ This massage can help relieve foot strain and cramping.

## #5 Towel curls



You can strengthen your toes by spreading out a small towel on the floor, curling your toes around it, and pulling it towards you.

**Repeat 5 times.**

## #6 Picking up marbles



Another gripping exercise you can perform to keep your foot flexible is picking up marbles with your toes. Do this by placing 20 marbles on the floor in front of you and use your foot to pick the marbles up one by one and place them in a bowl.



*You can do this exercise while seated.*



## Can Bunion be prevented?



Avoid the use of high heel shoes



Avoid shoes with poor support such as those without heel counter or flexible midsole.



We recommend wearing shoes with low heel and wider toe box



Consider calf stretching which may help to prevent shortening of the calf muscle

# What is the treatment for Bunion?

Conservative management may include

- ◆ Footwear review and recommendation by a podiatrist
- ◆ In certain individuals, the podiatrist may recommend
  - ✎ an insert (off the shelf or custom made) also known as an insole which may improve foot function and reduce pain
- ◆ Stretching exercises
- ◆ Pain relief medications

## Consult your healthcare professional or podiatrist

If you have severe pain or trouble walking, your doctor can refer you to an orthopedic surgeon. There are many different types of surgery to realign the toe or remove the bony bump of a bunion.



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