

Argus Orthopaedic Zone

Bunion and Bunionette

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

As far as the foot problem “bunion” goes, it’s great to be a guy. Only one in ten bunion patients in my office is a man. That statistic holds up in other offices too. If the person has it in one foot it will likely occur in the other foot too.

Other Facts

- Strong tendency runs in families
- It is often seen in adolescent girls age 10 – 15
- Tight shoes are a probable cause
- Rarely seen in boys
- Women’s high heels are a factor

Bunionette

It is similar to a bunion except a bunionette is on the opposite side of the foot near the base of the little toe. Tight shoes may be an important cause of bunionettes.

What Is A Bunion?

At first it may appear as a small bump at the base of the big toe. It may not hurt. As it gets bigger it will get painful in most patients. Occasionally, even very large bunions are not painful.

Soon you begin to limit the shoes you wear.

Friction from the bump rubbing inside the shoe can cause bursitis. This is a painful inflammation in a fluid filled sac that forms over the bump. It will be red, swollen and may even feel warm to the touch.

Deformity

After awhile the big toe starts to angle towards the second toe. The big toe may force its way under the second toe forcing the second toe out of alignment. It gives the foot a very distorted appearance. Amazingly, some really bad bunions do not cause arthritis to form in the big toe joint. In other patients significant arthritis occurs.

Early Treatment Of Symptoms

Sounds sort of obvious, but

- At first you have to put aside shoes that cause pain and find a wider pair.
- Shoes with a softer upper part are best
- Switch entirely to flip flops (Joke! Just kidding!)
- Avoid shoes with higher heels
- Cover the bump with a soft pad that will fit in your shoe.

Medium Treatment

In *early treatment* and *medium treatment* we are treating your symptoms and trying to help your foot be as comfortable as possible with the foot deformity you have. Remember your foot size gets larger as you age.

I often recommend that a person look into orthotics or arch supports because changes in your foot structure can decrease pressure on the bunion if the shape of your foot is contributing to the problem.

Surgery

If conservative treatment fails to relieve the pain when you walk there are several surgical procedures designed to correct bunions and bunionettes. I don't need to go into detail here because the several operations have different indications depending on the problem

Mostly this surgery is done as an outpatient and it can take 6 – 8 weeks to get back into a walking or athletic shoe.

I hope this overview helps you to understand more about these foot problems. See you next week.

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Dr. Haverbush