

Bunion

A bunion is a bony bulge at the base of the big toe. It appears as a hard bulge along the inside edge of your foot. As the deformity increases it can become inflamed with shoe wear and cause pain. The skin around the bunion may become swollen or red.

Most bunions occur as a result of wearing shoes that are too tight and pinch the toes together. High heels make this worse. In the minority of cases a bunion is due to poor alignment of the foot and ankle, which puts extra weight on the instep of each foot.

Once a bunion forms it changes the way weight is distributed in your foot. This causes the bunion to get worse over time. As a result, the big toe points more and more toward the other toes.

A minor bunion can be treated by wearing properly fitting shoes, padding the bunion or wearing shoe inserts (orthotics) to provide better alignment of the foot and ankle. Physical therapy with ultrasound or whirlpool baths can relieve pain and inflammation. Severe cases may require surgery. If the factors causing bunions are not treated, the bunion tends to get larger and more painful.

HOME CARE:

1. Limit the use of high heels. These shoes force your foot forward, crowding the toes together.
2. Switch to comfortable shoes with a wide toe area; or have your existing shoes stretched by a shoe repair shop.
3. Avoid shoes that are tight, narrow or pointed.
4. If you are flat-footed, use of arch supports may be helpful in slowing the progression of the deformity. The best shoe inserts are the ones custom made.
5. Taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) to control pain, unless another medicine was prescribed. [**NOTE:** If you have chronic liver or kidney disease or ever had a stomach ulcer or GI bleeding, talk with your doctor before using these medicines.]

Contact your doctor if any of the following occur:

- Increasing pain or redness around the base of the big toe
- Painful ingrown toenail with redness and swelling or pus around the nail