

toes pressing together.

- **Steroid injections** – this can help reduce inflammation in a stressed joint which may help to ease pain. It is not a cure but if used in conjunction with all other options it can be helpful for many.
- **Surgery** – Surgery on the bones of your foot is not a definitive option for resolving pain from a bunion. It is however the only option that will 'straighten' the toes. Surgery comes with its own risks and would only be considered if all other conservative options have been carried out.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services.

Further information about the service and how to manage a range of foot health problems yourself, can also be found on our website: [www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry](http://www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry)

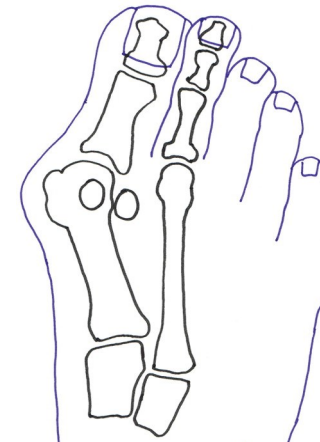
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## Podiatry Services Patient Information Leaflet



## Hallux Abducto-Valgus: HAV or Bunions

(June 2021 V1)

A bunion, also known as Hallux Abducto Valgus (HAV), is a change in shape of the big toe joint where the big toe angles increasingly towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> toe and can lead to a bony protrusion on the inside of the foot. Sometimes this condition can result in discomfort or pain but is not directly linked with pain or difficulty (you can have a bunion and be pain free).

## Causes of a Bunion or Hallux Abducto Valgus

There is no one cause of a bunion. Often, footwear is blamed, however, research studies have ruled this out. There are some risk factors which may contribute to bunion development or the onset of pain:

- **Foot type** - Bunions may be a result of the mechanical structure of the foot, which is genetic; these foot types make a person more predisposed to the development of a Bunion.
- **Footwear** – Poorly fitting footwear can result in pain, as tight or narrow footwear can squeeze the forefoot, crowding the toes together. Certain styles such as soft, thin soled or flat footwear can increase the pressure or weight placed through the joint during weight-bearing activities which may result symptoms.

## Treatment Options

Bunions are not always painful. The size of a bunion does not relate to the intensity of pain that someone may experience.

By following the below advice, many people can become more comfortable or even pain free.

**Footwear** can make a significant improvement in your bunion difficulty:

- Shoes should be 'Wide' and 'Deep' enough to accommodate your toes. Avoid hard/stiff upper materials, ridges or seams which may press on the joint.

- A stiff soled shoe can reduce pressure to the joint and make it more comfortable and functional (try bending or twisting the shoe- the more difficult this is to do, the better).
- A shoe with a rocker bottom sole can significantly reduce forefoot pressure and help reduce the need for your big toe joint to bend when walking.
- A useful tip can be to draw around your foot on the back of a cereal box, cut it out and fit it inside your shoe to see if it is wide enough for your foot. Or try removing the shoes manufacturers insoles and standing on them to see if your forefoot sits over the edges.
- Avoid wearing higher heels which force pressure to the front of your foot (a small heel below 2 inches can be helpful for some).
- Avoid wearing slip on, non-supportive/flexible footwear which can increase the pressure and weight placed through the forefoot when walking.
- Avoid wearing completely flat shoes which can also force increased pressure to the forefoot.
- Soft upper materials such as leather can stretch/mould or be stretched to help accommodate the width of your foot.

**Exercises.** Try some stretching exercises of the calf (muscle on the back of your lower leg). In time this can help to reduce pressure and pain to the affected joint (see the enclosed leaflet).

## What if this does not help?

- **Insoles/Orthoses** – Your Podiatrist may carry out an assessment to see if the functioning of your foot is aggravating the affected joint and may issue a specialised insole/orthotic to reduce pressure/stress to the joint.
- **Footwear modifications** – It may be possible to make small adaptations or stretch your shoe to reduce pressure at the joint (modifications can be made to the upper, or the sole).
- **Toe wedges/pads** – These can help to reduce pressure of the