

What if this does not help?

- **Insoles/Orthoses** – A Podiatrist can provide 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). A Podiatrist can help with this.
- **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. 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.

For more information about our services and how to manage common foot problems at home, please visit our website:

www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

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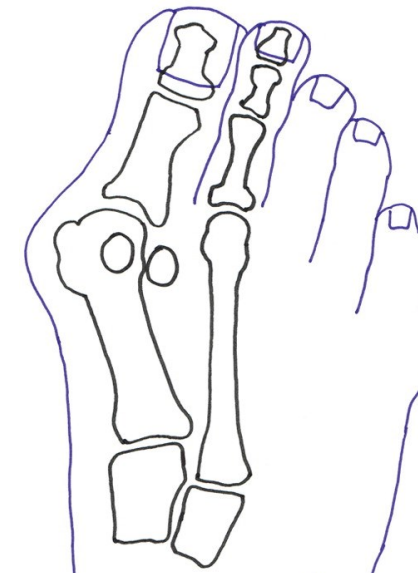
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Podiatry Services

Patient Information Leaflet

Hallux Abducto-Valgus (Bunions)

V2 September 2025



A bunion, also known as Hallux Abducto Valgus (HAV), is a change in alignment of the big toe joint where the big toe angles increasingly towards the 2nd 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 and Contributing Factors

There is no one cause of a bunion. Often, footwear is blamed, however, research studies have ruled this out.

- Bunions often run in families because of inherited foot structure.
- Conditions like **rheumatoid arthritis, hypermobility, or neurological conditions** can affect the strength and alignment of the surrounding tendons and ligaments resulting in the joint drifting out of alignment over time.
- Muscle imbalances can pull unevenly on the joint, gradually moving the big toe out of alignment.

Causes of Pain Relating to Bunions

There are some risk factors which may contribute to the onset of pain:

- **Footwear width**— poorly fitting shoes can press on the big toe joint and crowd the forefoot, causing pain.
- **Footwear styles** with soft, thin soles or completely flat shoes can increase pressure through the joint, sometimes resulting in metatarsalgia (pain under the ball of the foot). **Please refer to the Metatarsalgia Leaflet for further information.**
- Bunions can sometimes push the second toe out of position, resulting in hammer toes or overlapping toes which can create extra pressure points and pain – **please refer to the Toe Deformities Information Leaflet for further information.**
- Stress to the joint can result in stiffness, aching, and pain when using it during weight-bearing activities

Treatment Options for Bunion Pain

Bunions do not always cause pain, and the size of a bunion does not relate to pain intensity. The following advice can help many people become more comfortable or even pain-free.

Footwear can make a significant improvement in your bunion difficulty - **please refer to the Footwear Advice Leaflet for further information.**

- Shoes should be wide and deep enough to accommodate your toes. Avoid hard or stiff uppers, ridges, or seams that press on the joint – **please refer to the Wider and Deeper Fitting Shoes Advice Leaflet for further information.**
- **A stiff-soled shoe with a thick sole and a slight heel raise (8–12 mm)** can help reduce pressure on the bunion and improve comfort. Running or walking shoes often provide this support. **Avoid completely flat shoes**, as they can increase stress on the joint.
- Shoes with a rocker-bottom sole can reduce forefoot pressure and the need for the big toe to bend while walking - **please refer to the Rocker Sole Footwear Leaflet for further information.**
- Avoid high heels which shift pressure to the front of the foot.
- Avoid slip-on, non-supportive footwear which can increase fore-foot pressure and rubbing during walking.
- Toe wedges or pads can help reduce pressure on the toes – **please refer to the Toe Deformities Information Leaflet for further information.**
- **Exercises.** Gentle calf stretches can help reduce pressure and pain on the affected joint. Stand facing a wall, place your hands on the wall, step back with the affected leg and gently stretch the calf for 30 seconds. Repeat 5-10 times daily.
- Loosening laces or skipping lower eyelets may help the shoe accommodate your bunion better.
- Soft leather shoes can often be professionally stretched at the forefoot; home stretching devices are also available.