Podiatry Services
Patient Information Leaflet

Juvenile Hallux Valgus
Bunions in Children
(V2 November 2026)

What is a bunion?
A bunion, known as hallux valgus or hallux abducto-valgus, happens when the big toe points towards the second toe. A bony lump can develop at the base of the toe that can rub on the inside of your shoe.

What are the symptoms of a bunion?
In the early stages the bony lump may not be painful, however, if it gets bigger or if your shoes are tighter, there may be friction between the bunion and the shoe causing inflammation.

What causes bunions?
Shoes do not cause bunions – that's a myth. Bunions tend to run in families and in some cases are associated with joint diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis. They usually occur during middle age, although some people do develop bunions in their teens. When this happens, it is known as juvenile hallux valgus.

What should I do if I have a bunion?
If you develop a bunion as a child or teen, there is some evidence that a hallux valgus night splint may help due to the bones still being flexible and growing. This type of treatment does not work for adults and the best self-management is to wear wide-fitting shoes.

Hallux Valgus night splints can be purchased easily online and can be worn for periods when resting.

Footwear
Ensure children's footwear is fitting correctly and check this on a regular basis. If the big toe joint is rubbing on the side it maybe that the toe box is too narrow.

Footwear should be sturdy and supportive with a structured, cushioned sole that is not too thin or flat. All footwear should have a secure, adjustable fastening. Make sure socks and tights are not too tight also.

Can treatment help?
An insole may help to reduce symptoms by improving your foot posture. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that an insole will prevent or correct a bunion.

Surgery
Bunion surgery is a major operation and there is a risk of complications. There are some alternative operations that are being used for Juvenile Hallux Valgus but these should only be considered if other options are not reducing the symptoms and the problem is affecting your child significantly.

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

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