

Bunions (Hallux Abducto Valgus)



American College of
Foot and Ankle Surgeons®

Even though bunions are a common foot deformity, there are misconceptions about them. Many people may unnecessarily suffer the pain of bunions for years before seeking treatment.

What Is a Bunion?

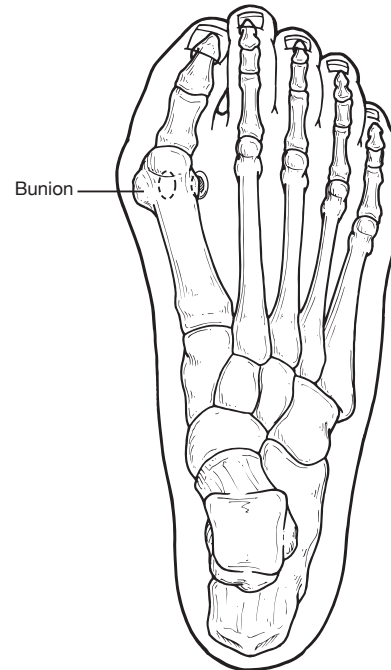
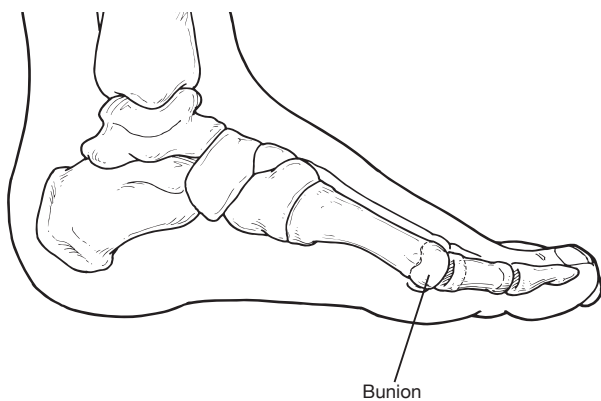
A bunion (also referred to as hallux valgus or hallux abducto valgus) is often described as a bump on the side of the big toe. But a bunion is more than that. The visible bump actually reflects changes in the bony framework of the front part of the foot. The big toe leans toward the second toe, rather than pointing straight ahead. This throws the bones out of alignment – producing the bunion’s “bump.”

Bunions are a progressive disorder. They begin with a leaning of the big toe, gradually changing the angle of the bones over the years and slowly producing the characteristic bump, which becomes increasingly prominent. Symptoms usually appear at later stages, although some people never have symptoms.

Causes

Bunions are most often caused by an inherited faulty mechanical structure of the foot. It is not the bunion itself that is inherited, but certain foot types that make a person prone to developing a bunion.

Although wearing shoes that crowd the toes won’t actually cause bunions, it sometimes makes the deformity get progressively worse. Symptoms may therefore appear sooner.



Symptoms

Symptoms, which occur at the site of the bunion, may include:

- Pain or soreness
- Inflammation and redness
- A burning sensation
- Possible numbness

Symptoms occur most often when wearing shoes that crowd the toes, such as shoes with a tight toe box or high heels. This may explain why women are more likely to have symptoms than men. In addition, spending long periods of time on your feet can aggravate the symptoms of bunions.

Diagnosis

Bunions are readily apparent – the prominence is visible at the base of the big toe or side of the foot. However, to fully evaluate the condition, the foot and ankle surgeon may take x-rays to determine the degree of the deformity and assess the changes that have occurred.