

A GUIDE TO BUNIONS (HALLUX VALGUS)

OVERVIEW

Hallux Valgus, commonly known as a bunion, is often mistaken as a simple bony growth caused by shoe gear. The actual condition is much more varied and complex. In order to keep the first metatarsal phalangeal joint (MPJ) in proper alignment, 20 ligaments and tendons need to work in perfect balance throughout the gait cycle. Abnormalities such as pronation can cause an imbalance of this complex joint leading to deformity of the hallux and first metatarsal.

APPEARANCE

Outwardly the condition looks like a bump growing on the side or top of the first metatarsal head with varying degrees of lateral deviation of the hallux.

SYMPTOMS

- Pain on the top, side or the bottom of the first metatarsal head.
- Joint pain at the 1st metatarsal joint (great tow).
- Numbness on the medial aspect of the toe
- Swelling and erythema
- Pain sub-second metatarsal head due to transfer of weight from the first metatarsal.

DIAGNOSIS

Physical examination is usually enough to diagnose a bunion, however, x-rays will be needed to determine the severity of the condition as well as the proper course of treatment. Ultrasound can also be used to evaluate the dynamic functioning of the first metatarsal phalangeal joint.

TREATMENT OF MILD BUNIONS

Initial treatment involves management of symptoms and biomechanical control.

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories
- Steroid injections.
- Changes in footwear
- Functional orthotics: Orthotics are a vital part of treatment when biomechanical abnormalities are present

TREATMENT OF MODERATE OR SEVERE BUNIONS

A bunion is considered moderate or severe when permanent structural changes have occurred and the first MPJ is non-congruent. In these cases, one of several surgical procedures can be used to restore proper structure and function to the foot.

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Chicago Podiatric Surgeons is dedicated to providing the best possible podiatric care for your patients. This care includes answering patient questions and ensuring they understand their treatment options. Of course, the understanding of treatment options starts with you, the primary care physician. We hope that you find this overview of common podiatric disorders to be helpful in the care of your patients, and that you look forward to receiving future topics from us.

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