

Questions?

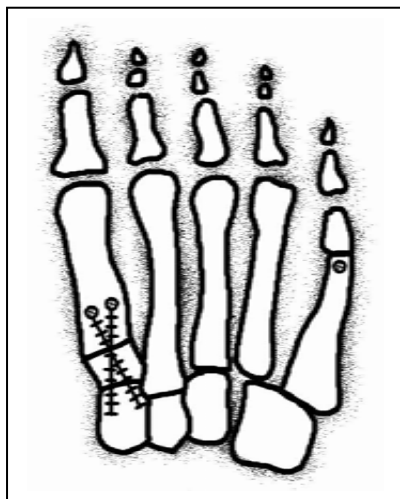
Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help.

Bone and Joint Center:
206-598-4288

Evaluating Your Bunion

Your doctor may have already checked your bunion and taken X-rays to see how much your bones have moved. Your doctor may also have checked range of motion in your hip, ankle, and toe.

When deciding on a treatment plan, your doctor will consider your activity levels for work and play. Most times, we try the most conservative approach first. Surgery is done when conservative treatment does not ease your pain or help you return to your normal activities.



Base wedge osteotomy: In this surgery, the bone is cut at the base, moved, and pinned into place to correct alignment.

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About Bunions and Bunionettes

What is a bunion?

A *bunion* is a bump on your foot, right behind the big toe. Sometimes the bunion is on the side and sometimes it is on top. This looks like, but is not, a growth of bone. The bones are still the same size, but the 1st *metatarsal* (a bone of the foot between the ankle and the toes) has splayed out away from the other metatarsal bones. This makes a bump and can also make the foot wider. When this happens, the big toe starts to shift and go over or under the 2nd toe. This is known as *hallux valgus*, the medical term for the big toe being in the wrong place.

How do bunions form?

One or more of these factors may play a part in the formation of bunions:

- Our feet carry all of our weight with each step. The 1st metatarsal bone splays out with this pressure, and sometimes our ligaments cannot hold it in place.
- Shoes that push toes together can make bunions form.
- Family history of bunions and foot types with a less stable 1st metatarsal can also play a role.

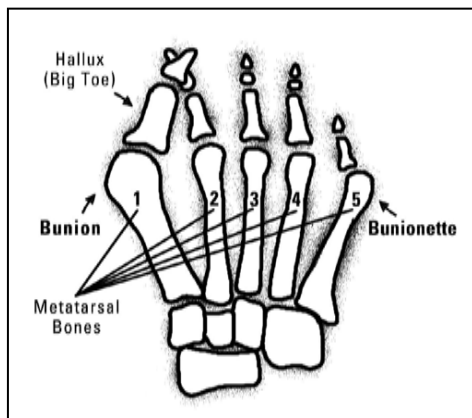
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How do bunions cause pain?

There are 2 types of bunion pain: bump pain and joint pain.

Bump pain occurs when a bony bump sticks out on the side of your foot and rubs against the inside of your shoe. You will not feel this pain when you are barefoot.

Bunion joint pain is an ache that comes from deep inside the big toe joint. This pain is not controlled by shoe changes and will even hurt when you are barefoot. This is the pain that is caused by the hallux valgus, where the big toe starts to shift over toward the other toes. The joint is trying to work in the wrong position. Sometimes only a small bunion causes the worst pain.



Right foot with bunion and bunionette: With bunions and bunionettes, the metatarsal bones splay out. In bunions, the 1st metatarsal splays out. In bunionettes, the 5th metatarsal splays out. With a bunion, the *hallux* (big toe) shifts and crowds the other toes.

Conservative Treatment

For bump pain, you can change the kind of shoes you wear:

- Switch to shoes with a large “toe box.” No pumps, high heels, or pointed toes.
- Ask us about changes that can be made to shoes you already own. Sometimes they can be stretched, padded, or even work if a hole is cut in them!
- Ask your doctor if *orthotics* (shoe inserts) might help relieve your pain.

Surgical Treatment

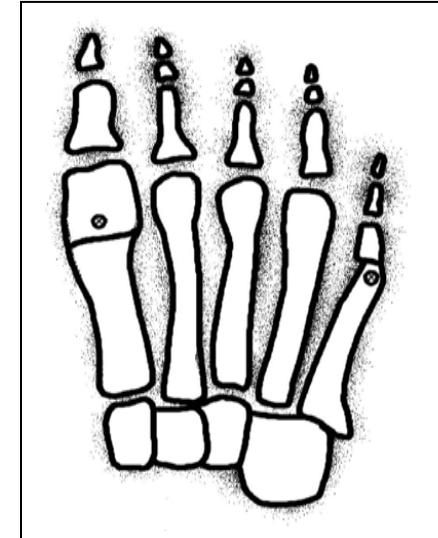
Surgery is the only way to get rid of a bunion. That does not mean that everyone with a bunion needs surgery! Our main goal is to ease your pain.

But, surgery for bunions is very common. It is done on an outpatient basis. The surgery is very easy to undergo and has few risks. It can be done with local *anesthesia* (numbing medicine to block pain).

The hard part about the surgery is the recovery and rehabilitation time. It can take about 1 to 3 months to get back to normal. For very small bunions, the bump is simply shaved down. For more severe cases, the 1st metatarsal bone is cut and moved and then pinned into place. For this type of surgery, you may need to use crutches for a few weeks.

What is a bunionette?

Bunionettes, or *tailor’s bunions*, are the same as a bunion, but they are on the opposite side of the foot, behind the little toe. Most of the pain from these is bump pain. Treatment is the same as for bunions, except that orthotics do not work as well. Recovery from bunionette surgery is much easier than recovery from bunion surgery.



“Austin” bunionectomy: In this surgery, the metatarsal bone is cut near the joint. The bone is moved and a screw is put in to hold it in place.