

Bunions

The development of bump on the outside of the forefoot at the base of the big toe, is a condition referred to as hallux abducto valgus, in other words a bunion.

This is usually hereditary but can be aggravated by poor shoes or the way we walk. But the primary cause is in the genes.

Some develop bunions at an early age, called juvenile hallux valgus. Some develop it in the 3rd or 4th decade or even later.

The condition involves several deformities. The first and second metatarsal splay or spread apart so the head of the first metatarsal is prominent medially or in a left foot juts out at the right part of the forefoot. Soft tissue over this bump swells and organizes into a bursal sac. Since the head juts out, the articular surface no longer fully contacts the base of the big toe as the toe points toward the second toe. The big toe often underlaps the second toe creating another disease process, a hammered second toe.

As the bones settle in the incorrect position, the tendons and ligaments are stretched or tighten depending on which side of the toe they are on and the deformity is permanent. A callus develops on the medial or outside of the big toe because of pressure from the ground and the shoe counter.

So a bunion is actually a lot of things going on at the same time. And each person with a bunion can experience different problems depending on their lifestyle, shoes and additional medical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis or diabetes.

If a person has a bunion, this is not normal and it should be addressed by a visit to a podiatrist. Advice on shoes, orthoses or surgery can be discussed, usually to the patient's satisfaction.