How do I contact a podiatrist?

To find a local Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered NHS podiatrist (also known as a chiropodist), contact your GP reception service and ask for an NHS referral (in some areas you can self refer), but please note that only certain conditions are eligible for NHS referral. Alternatively you can visit a local private practice podiatrist by using the "Find a Podiatrist" search on the College of Podiatry website www.feetforlife.org.

Foot health information

The College of Podiatry website www.feetforlife.org provides a wealth of foot health information in the form of online advice and PDF leaflets for you to download.

Foot health videos from the College of Podiatry

The College of Podiatry has a produced a range of foot health videos.

To view these 2-3 minute videos can viewed the dedicated College of Podiatry YouTube Channel:

www.youtube.com/c/CollegeofPodiatryUK

YouTube

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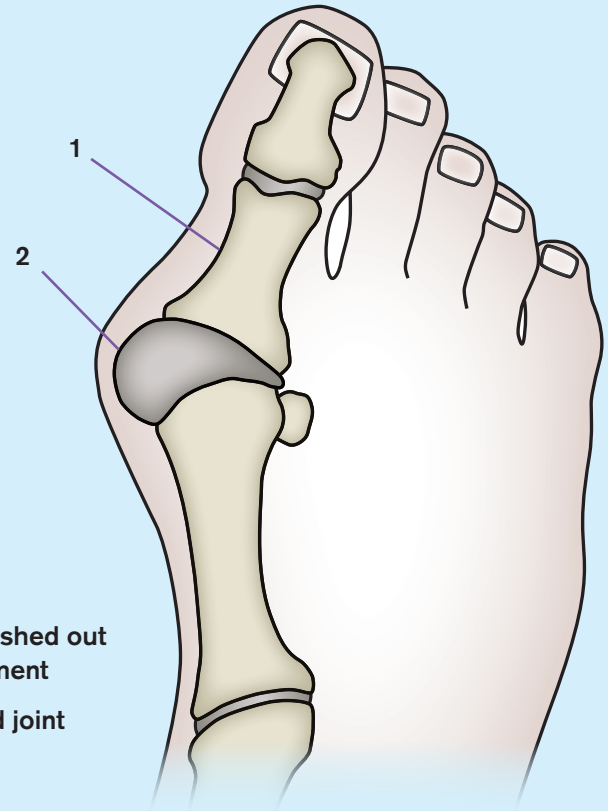
The Bunion





1. **Bone pushed out of alignment**
2. **Enlarged joint**

What is a Bunion?

Victoria Beckham has helped to popularise the bunion with her much publicised feet, and more than 15% of women in the UK suffer from bunions, but what is a bunion? A bunion also known as *Hallux valgus* is a deformity of the big toe which leads to a bony lump on the side of the foot. A bunion has no single cause, but can be the result of genetics, age, arthritis, playing sport or bad footwear.

Are they Serious?

Some people have massive bunions that aren't that painful but cause difficulties with shoes, while others have relatively small bunions that are very painful. Pressure from the big toe pushing over in to second toe can lead to problems also. Commonly it ends up lying on top of the big toe, therefore if the second toe and big toe cross over, it can be difficult to walk, due to pressure on the toes from footwear.

Once the big toe leans toward the second toe, the tendons no longer pull the toe in a straight line, so the problem tends to get progressively worse. This condition can also lead to corns and calluses developing.

What can a podiatrist do?

Your podiatrist can recommend exercises, orthoses (special devices inserted into shoes), shoe alterations or night splints (which hold toes straight over night) which may slow the progression of bunions in children. Conservative measures such as these may help relieve symptoms, though there is no evidence they can correct the underlying deformity. Only surgery can correct the defect. Extra bone needs removing, and with displaced toes, the bone needs to be cut, realigned and pinned.

What can a podiatric surgeon do?

Your podiatrist can refer you to a podiatric surgeon who will evaluate the extent of the deformity. A podiatric surgeon can remove the bunion and realign the toe joint in an operation generally referred to as a 1st Metatarsal Osteotomy. However, there are actually around 130 different operations that fall under this title - so don't presume you'll need the same type of surgery as that friend of a friend who couldn't walk for 3 months!

The aim of surgery is to address the underlying deformity so as to prevent recurrence. Which type of surgery your podiatric surgeon recommends will depend on the severity of your bunion? Because there are risks and complications with any type of surgery, it's not usually advised unless your bunions are causing pain or if they start to deform your other toes.

How to avoid bunions

Must we wear granny shoes to escape them? No, but looking after your feet will help. Wear backless high heels in moderation, vary heel height daily (ideally no higher than 4cm) and avoid crowding your toes.

Further reading

The Society's website www.feetforlife.org has supplementary reading on bunions, bunion surgery and other toe deformities.