

# Hallux valgus (bunions)

## Information for patients

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### What is hallux valgus?

Hallux valgus or a bunion, is when there is a bony bump at the base of the big toe joint with the big toe turning towards the second toe.

### What are the causes?

Although the exact cause is not well understood, risk factors include:

- Trauma or an injury
- Ill fitting footwear
- A family history of having bunions
- Structural changes in your feet.



It is estimated that, across the globe, 23% of 18-65 year olds have hallux valgus and 35% of people aged 65 or more have hallux valgus. Females are at greater risk and are 9 times more likely to develop hallux valgus than men.

### What are the symptoms?

- In many cases, bunions do not cause any pain
- If there is pain, it is usually around your big toe joint
- The pain may spread to cover the second toe or second toe joint
- Restricted movement in your big toe
- The pain is made worse by flexing your toe, ill fitting footwear or weight-bearing activity.

### How is it diagnosed?

An appropriate healthcare professional will discuss your foot symptoms and enquire about your general health. A physical examination of your foot will be carried out to assess your movement, response to particular tests and level of pain. This can be clinically diagnosed. An x-ray might be requested if surgery is being considered.

### What is the management of hallux valgus (bunions)?

Many patients are happy to self-manage their symptoms with painkillers/anti-inflammatory medication or other non-invasive treatments, such as:

- Lifestyle and health changes

- Changes to your activity
- Wearing appropriate footwear
- Podiatry.

## Lifestyle and health changes

- Maintaining a healthy diet and weight
- Getting 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night
- Reducing your alcohol intake
- Quit smoking.

Not all of these recommendations may be relevant to you, but these are important factors to consider to optimise your outcome.

Further information and support can be found at <https://nhsinform.scot/healthy-living>

## How can I manage it?

- Rest/immobilisation/changes to your activity, as required
  - For example: If pain is caused by running, switching to an activity with less impact (such as swimming) may help.
- Pain relief or anti-inflammatory medication
  - Speak to your GP or pharmacist
- Wearing appropriate footwear
  - Avoiding high heeled or narrow footwear. Footwear with support may also help ease symptoms further.

## Podiatry

Through a thorough examination, a podiatrist can:

- Help you establish what may be causing your pain
- Provide you with a personal treatment plan to help and/or resolve symptoms
- Arrange for further investigation, if required.

## More invasive management options

In some cases the symptoms may persist and more invasive treatments may be required/requested by you, as the patient:

- **Corticosteroid injection:** Steroid injections are only carried out in some hallux valgus cases
- **Surgery:** Surgery is only required if pain is present and symptoms are unable to be controlled by the methods described above.