

# BUNIONS

Even though bunions are a common foot deformity, there are misconceptions about them. Many people may unnecessarily suffer the pain of bunions for years before seeking treatment.

## What Is a Bunion?

Bunions are often described as a bump on the side of the big toe. But a bunion is more than that. The visible bump actually reflects changes in the bony framework of the front part of the foot. With a bunion, the big toe leans toward the second toe, rather than pointing straight ahead. This throws the bones out of alignment—producing the bunion’s “bump.”

Bunions are a progressive disorder. They begin with a leaning of the big toe, gradually changing the angle of the bones over the years and slowly producing the characteristic bump, which continues to become increasingly prominent. Usually the symptoms of bunions appear at later stages, although some people never have symptoms.

## What Causes a Bunion?

Bunions are most often caused by an inherited faulty mechanical structure of the foot. It is not the bunion itself that is inherited, but certain foot types that make a person prone to developing a bunion.

Although wearing shoes that crowd the toes won’t actually cause bunions in the first place, it sometimes makes the deformity get progressively worse. That means you may experience symptoms sooner.

## Diagnosis

Bunions are readily apparent—you can see the prominence at the base of the big toe or side of the foot. However, to fully evaluate your condition, the podiatric foot and ankle

surgeon may take x-rays to determine the degree of the deformity and assess the changes that have occurred.

Because bunions are progressive, they don’t go away, and will usually get worse over time. But not all cases are alike—some bunions progress more rapidly than others. Once your podiatric surgeon has evaluated your particular case, a treatment plan can be developed that is suited to your needs.

## Treatment

Early treatments are aimed at easing the pain of bunions, but they don’t reverse the deformity of the bunion itself. Treatment options include: wearing a wider more comfortable shoe, padding the bunion, medications, injection therapy and orthotics.



## When is Surgery Needed?

When the pain of a bunion interferes with daily activities, it’s time to discuss surgical options with Dr. Cain or Dr. Cauthon. Together you can decide if surgery is best for you.

Recent advances in surgical techniques have led to a very high success rate in treating bunions. A variety of procedures are designed to remove the “bump” of bone, correct the changes in the bony structure of the foot, as well as correct soft tissue changes that may also have occurred. The goal of these corrections is the elimination of pain.