

# Wearing wider shoes, lower heels may remediate bunion problems

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A bunion is a bony bump at the side of the big toe.

It is located at the main joint of the big toes and is the result of misalignment of the bones at that joint. The most common symptom of a bunion is pain.

It usually results from the bump rubbing on the shoe. Walking can be very painful at times. The pain is typically worse when wearing a narrow shoe but may be present with a wide shoe.

The main cause of bunions is wearing too tightly fitting shoes. Many stylish women's shoes with high heels and pointed toes are major contributors to the formation of bunions.

As might be expected, bunions are much more common in women than men. Statistics reveal that nine out of 10 bunions occur in women.

Heredity also may play a role.

Most bunions can be treated readily without surgery.

Simply wearing a wider shoe usually is enough to treat the symptoms. Also, a wider shoe significantly decreases the chance of the bunion becoming worse.

A shoe with a lower heel – less than 2 inches – typically is better.

There are many types of pads that alleviate pain.

While a majority of patients will do well with non-operative treatment, there are still those who continue to have pain.

These patients are good candidates for surgery.

The main indications for bunion surgery are pain and progressive deformity. There are many different surgical procedures to correct bunions.

The choice of the procedure is determined by the severity of the deformity. Most procedures require realigning the joint by cutting and shifting one of the bones of the joint and rebalancing the soft tissues that support the joint. Surgery typically is done as an outpatient.

A special protective shoe is worn for six to eight weeks after the surgery and weekly visits are made to the office for bandage changes.

Bandages are applied to hold the big toe in position while the bone and soft tissues heal.

A regular shoe may be worn after six to eight weeks.

Full recovery can take up to six months and during that time symptoms of mild pain, swelling and stiffness may persist. At full recovery, most patients will feel significantly better than their preoperative condition and will be able to wear a wider range of shoes more comfortably. However, it is still strongly recommended to avoid high-heeled, narrow shoes, since this likely will cause a recurrence.

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