



Hallux Valgus (Bunion)



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The Department of Orthopaedic Surgery offers specialist medical and surgical treatments on musculoskeletal disorders, joint replacements, foot and ankle disorders, among other trauma injuries. Our consultants and surgeons work closely with sports medicine physicians, physiotherapists, podiatrists and other healthcare professionals to help patients return to their normal activities after surgery.

What is hallux valgus?

Hallux Valgus is a medical term used to describe a 'bunion'. It is a very common condition that affects both men and women, but women are more prone to it. Bunions often become symptomatic in people between 30 to 50 years old, but can also develop much earlier.

Symptoms include pain, swelling and redness over the inner aspect of the big toe joint. Pain may also be felt under the lesser toes in the form of a burning sensation or a feeling of 'walking on pebbles'.



Before



Six weeks after surgery

What are the treatment options?

Non-operative options include getting shoes that are wide enough for your feet or using a splint to slow the progress. Custom-made insoles (orthotics) may be helpful in some cases. Physiotherapy to stretch the calf muscles may also alleviate the symptoms.

However, surgery is the only treatment option that can strengthen the toe and provide long term relief.

Surgery

+ Scarf Osteotomy

- An incision is made between the first and second toes to release tight tissues on the side of the big toe.
- A second incision is made along the inner side of the big toe joint to remove the bony bump (or bunion)
- The main bone (the first metatarsal) is cut, re-shaped and fixed together with two small screws.
- The operation takes about 45 minutes and can be performed as a day surgery.



+ Anaesthetic

- The surgery is usually performed under general anaesthesia.
- An 'ankle block' will be performed while you are asleep to help with pain relief. This anaesthetic nerve block usually lasts for a few hours but pain relief medication will be administered. Do not be alarmed if your foot feels numb when you awake, it is due to the anaesthetic nerve block that will wear off in about two hours (similar to a local anaesthesia at a dental clinic).

+ Dressings

- A large bandage will be placed around your toe, foot and ankle, and should be kept on to maintain the position of your big toe while the soft tissues heal.
- You will be provided with a post-operative shoe that allows you to put as much weight on your foot as you are comfortable to. Occasionally, your doctor may advise you to use crutches.



After surgery

+ How much rest do I need?

In general, a medical certificate will be provided for the following durations:

- Four weeks for patients with desk-bound jobs
- Six weeks for patients whose jobs involve standing or walking
- Eight weeks for patients doing manual labour

Depending on your job, we will provide an appropriate medical certificate to you.

+ What do I have to take note of after surgery?

- It is important that you elevate your foot as much as possible in the first two weeks after surgery to reduce swelling and promote wound-healing. It is also the most effective method of pain relief in the early post-operative period.

- **Exercises**

The more exercises you do, the sooner you will be able to regain movement in your toe.

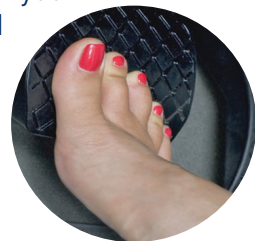
- > Try to wiggle your toes in the bandage from day one post surgery period
- > After two weeks, you may still feel limited by the bandage, but you should try to:
 - Hold your toe with your hand and move it up and down
 - If the second or third toes were also operated on, it is very important to bend them downwards regularly. This is to prevent them from remaining at an upward angle.
 - Scrunch up your bed sheets with your toes
- > After six weeks, continue to do the above exercises and try to:
 - Move your toes as much as you are able to
 - Massage your scars (the action of rubbing is more important than the type of cream used)
 - Put weight on your toe to bend it upwards

- **Swelling**

Swelling always occurs after a foot surgery and it can take up to six to nine months to fully subside. Keep your foot elevated (ideally above the level of your heart) in the first two weeks after your surgery to reduce swelling.

When can I drive?

You must be fully mobile, comfortable and able to make an emergency stop without worrying if it might hurt to do so. Undergoing surgery on your right foot will affect your ability to drive for a longer period, as compared to surgery on your left foot. It will be at least six weeks before you are able to drive, after surgery on your right foot.



Will the metalwork need to be removed?

The metalwork very rarely needs to be removed.

Possible risks and complications

Complications associated with this procedure are rare. However, they can include:

- **Stiffness:** Your foot will be swollen at first, and you will need to elevate it. The swelling will subside over time, but it will still be apparent for up to six to nine months. Your toe will also feel stiff, but should gradually regain its original range of movement.
- **Infection:** There is always a risk of infection as with all surgical procedures. The incidence is only about 1% for this procedure. You will be given one dose of intravenous antibiotics during surgery to prevent an infection. You will also need to keep your foot elevated for ten days. If an infection occurs, a course of oral antibiotics is normally able to resolve it. If you have concerns, please contact our clinic for an earlier appointment.
- **Nerve damage/scar sensitivity:** A nerve which lies beneath the incision may get damaged during the procedure. It is usually a bruise that will recover. If the damage is permanent, it will leave a small area with numbness. However, it will not impair your movement. Approximately a quarter of patients experience sensitivity at the scarred area after a foot surgery. For most patients, this can be resolved by massaging the scarred area once they have healed to de-sensitise it.
- **Undercorrection:** Occasionally, the deformity of the toe is not wholly corrected. This is more common in severe cases, but is rarely a problem. Please consult your doctor if you have concerns.

- **Overcorrection:** In very rare cases, the toe is over-straightened and angles away from the foot (hallux varus). This is a rare complication that may require a supplementary surgery. Please consult your doctor if you have concerns.

Follow-up appointments

- A follow-up appointment will be arranged approximately two weeks after your surgery to review and change your dressings. Please do not remove the dressings on your own prior to this appointment.
- Your foot will be re-bandaged to protect the position of your toe for another four weeks. Please continue to wear your post-operative shoe to walk.
- At approximately six weeks after surgery, you will meet your doctor again to remove your bandages. An X-ray will also be taken to monitor the healing of your bones.

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