

# Bunions

A bunion is a bony lump or deformity that forms on the side of the big toe. It happens when the joint of the big toe grows sideways. This pushes the bones of the big toe towards the smaller toes.

Bunions can cause pain. There are ways to ease the pain but only surgery can remove the bunion and correct the deformity.

## Check if you have a bunion



A bunion is a hard lump on the side of your feet, by your big toe.



Your big toe may point towards your other toes.



The skin over the lump is usually hard, red or swollen.

You may also have pain along the side or bottom of your feet. This is usually worse when wearing shoes and walking.

## If you're not sure it's a bunion

A bunion can have similar symptoms to:

- gout - red, hot, swollen skin over the affected joint and pain that comes and goes
- arthritis - aching, swollen and stiff joints that usually feel worse in the morning
- broken toe - pain, bruising and swelling after hurting your toe

### Speak to a GP if:

- you are not sure it's a bunion

## How you can ease bunion pain

You cannot get rid of bunions yourself or stop them getting worse.

But there are things you can do to relieve pain.

### Do

- ✓ wear wide shoes with a low heel
- ✓ hold an ice pack or a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a tea towel to the bunion for up to 5 minutes at a time
- ✓ try bunion pads - you can get these in pharmacies to stop your bunion rubbing against your shoes
- ✓ ask your pharmacist about medicines that can help
- ✓ take paracetamol or ibuprofen
- ✓ stretch your calf muscles
- ✓ try to lose weight if you're overweight
- ✓ avoid wearing high heels, or tight pointy shoes

### Speak to a GP if:

- the pain has not improved after trying home treatments for a few weeks
- the pain is stopping you doing your normal activities
- your bunions are getting worse
- you also have diabetes - [foot problems](#) can be more serious

## Treatments from a GP or podiatrist

A GP or podiatrist can tell you:

- what you can do to ease your symptoms
- how to reduce bunion pain using insoles, toe spacers and toe supports

## Surgery for bunions

A GP may refer you to a surgeon if your bunion is very painful or is having a big effect on your life.

Surgery is not done just to improve how your feet look.

Surgery is the only way to remove a bunion and correct any deformity.

► [How surgery is done](#)

It can take a while to recover from surgery.

You'll usually need to:

- stay off your feet as much as possible for at least 2 weeks
- avoid driving for 6 to 8 weeks
- stay off work for 6 to 12 weeks
- avoid sports for up to 6 months

After surgery:

- your toes might be weaker or stiffer than before
- your toes may not be perfectly straight
- your feet might still be slightly wide, so you may still need wide-fitting shoes

Bunions sometimes come back after surgery.

Page last reviewed: 21 June 2023

Next review due: 21 June 2026

This project has received funding from the Government of Ireland's Sláintecare Integration Fund 2019

## HSE Live - we're here to help

Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm

Saturday: 9am to 5pm

Sunday: Closed

Bank holidays: Closed

Freephone: [1800 700 700](tel:1800700700)

From outside Ireland: [00 353 1 240 8787](tel:0035312408787)

[HSE Facebook](#)

[HSE Instagram](#)

[HSE TikTok](#)

[HSE YouTube](#)

[HSE LinkedIn](#)

[HSE X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Complaints and feedback](#)

[Emergencies](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Cookie statement](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy statement](#)

[Disclaimer](#)