



ORTHOPEDIC SURGERY OF THE FOOT AND ANKLE, PA

© Sarah E. Dewitt, MD

## BUNION INFORMATION (HALLUX VALGUS)

### WHAT IS A BUNION?

A bunion is an angular deformity of the joint between your big toe and your foot. It is not a bone spur or a growth.

### HOW DID I GET IT?

Most are related to shoe wear. Tight toe shoes and high heels drive the toes together. Over the years this can result in bunions and toe deformities. There is a hereditary component, also. On rare occasions, people have them since childhood. Other disorders that are associated include rheumatoid arthritis, diabetes, and trauma.

### WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

The primary treatment is good shoe wear. This includes relatively flat shoes with a wide forefoot. Surgery is a last resort. There is no way to get a better result than a pain-free foot. Surgery is reserved for those people who have pain with wide flat shoes and there is no other option. Cosmetic surgery (surgery to make your foot look straighter) is never recommended. The surgery for bunions changes the weight-bearing surface of your foot, and has complications associated.

### MY FOOT SEEMS TO BE WIDER?

Believe it or not, your foot widens with age. You can go up in size, too. Some people think this occurs with pregnancy, but actually it happens to all of us, including men. If you had a narrow foot when young, you may have difficulty fitting shoes to your wide forefoot and narrow heel. Padding added to back of heel can often facilitate comfortable fit.

### DO ORTHOTICS HELP?

Orthotics are inserts (arch supports) that one places into his or her shoe. They come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and variations of hardness. They can give comfort to some people, not all.

### CAN I WEAR BEAUTIFUL SHOES AT ALL?

Ah, the pain of beauty. I recommend that patients be allowed to wear "beautiful" shoes, those with high heel or tight toe, once a week to a special event for a couple of hours. Other than that, healthy, flat, wider toe box shoes are recommended for every-day use. Do not forget that sandals which are relatively flat and have plenty of room for your foot come in very fancy versions and can be a nice alternative for a dressy event.

### WHAT ABOUT ALL THE EXPENSIVE SHOES IN MY CLOSET?

Alas, if you are reading this, you are finding that you probably do not feel comfortable in all the fancy high-heel or tight-toe shoes. If you have a favorite pair that you wear on occasion, you can have the forefoot stretched professionally by a shoe repair shop. This costs about \$7-10 in our area. It can increase your comfort in that favorite shoe. You do not have to go home and throw out all your shoes. But you do want to move forward being in tune to the important shoe features (width of the toe box, height of the heel).