

Bunions in children and young people

Children's Hospital

Information for Patients

Last reviewed: April 2025

Next review: April 2028

Leaflet number: 345 Version: 3

What are bunions?

Bunions (hallux valgus) in children and young people are different from bunions in adults. Children's bunions are not caused by poor fitting footwear. They are usually passed down (genetic). They are more common in females and children with flat feet.

Bunion is the bony bump on the side of your foot near your big toe. It happens when your big toe pushes towards the other toes. It makes the joint at the base of the toe stick out. Children often have problems where the bone in the big toe leans over towards the other toes. This forms the bunion over the joint.

What are the treatments?

Simple non-surgical treatments should be tried before surgery is considered. Children's bones are soft and not fully developed so things like:

- padding to the toe
- well fitted and supportive shoes
- toe spacers and or splints can help to push the toe into the right position. Bunion splints may be used to try and stop the bunion from getting worse.

Surgery

Ideally for surgery your child should wait until they are around 18 to 19 years old.

We will think about surgery if other treatments do not work and if the bunion is causing pain that stops your child from doing activities.

Bunions in teenagers have a high risk of coming back after surgery so we try to wait as long as possible before using surgery.

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or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Why is it best to have the surgery later?

During surgery the bone in the big toe is moved into the correct position. The main concern with this surgery in children is that they are still growing. This affects the type of surgery used. Surgeons must avoid the ends of the bone where your bones grow. This is because damage to this area can affect bone growth. Your consultant will talk to you about which operation is best for your child.

The surgery involves breaking the bone. We then move it into the right place. We fix it in place using a wire, staples, or screws to hold it while it heals.

What happens on the day of surgery?

1. You will attend the hospital on the day of your operation.
2. Consent for the operation to go ahead will be done at your pre assessment appointment. This is normally done electronically.
3. You will be away from the ward for a couple of hours. 1 parent can take you to theatre and collect you after your operation. This is usually done under General anaesthetic.
4. A parent can stay with you during the day and at night if you need to stay overnight.

What happens after surgery?

- After the operation the foot will be bandaged. There may also be a small protective plaster cast around the toe and foot.
- The foot will need to be raised up (elevated) to stop swelling.
- When your child has recovered from their operation they will be seen by a physiotherapist who will show them how to use crutches.
- Children can usually go home the same day as long as your child has recovered and the physiotherapist is happy that they can use their crutches safely.
- We recommend that you have paracetamol and ibuprofen ready at home.
- The bandages or cast should stay in place for 6 weeks.
- The wound will be checked by a nurse after 2 weeks and then the bandage or cast will be replaced. You will get an appointment for this in the post. If wires have been used, these will be taken out after 6 weeks at an outpatient clinic.
- Your child will need to avoid contact sports for 6 weeks. A consultant can tell you when they can resume these sports.

Possible complications

- Infection: this is not common but is treated with antibiotics.
- The wires may become loose, or fall out. Please contact the Specialist nurse if you have any worries.
- There may be some scarring after the wound heals.
- There may be some altered feeling (pins and needles) around the wound. This will get better with time.

The consultant will discuss all the complications with you fully before surgery at your pre assessment appointment. This is a chance for you to ask any questions you may have.

Contact Details

Secretary 8am to 4pm: 0116 258 5756

Specialist Sister: 0795 088 8466

Deputy Sister: 0779 795 7248

Ward 19 (24 hours): 0116 258 5244

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Previous reference:

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