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THE PAINFUL BUNION DEFORMITY

What is a bunion? A bunion is a bump on the insider aspect of the foot at the base of the big toe. Underneath the skin, there is a bone that is unusually prominent which causes the bunion. The big toe often deviates toward the second toe and may even overlap the second toe.

There are several theories on what causes bunions. Heredity is a factor in many cases. If a close relative has bunions, they may be passed on to the next generation. But studies have been performed in which identical twins with the exact same genetic make-up were followed through the years and one twin would develop bunions and the other twin would not. So much for heredity being the only cause of bunions.

Another theory of bunion formation is that ill-fitting shoes are a factor. However, African tribesman who go barefoot throughout their lives develop bunions as well. We can only conclude that there are many causes of bunions.

If you do have a painful bunion, there are many things that can be done to alleviate pain. Conservative care consists of wider shoes, stretching shoes, and padding. Wider shoes made of a soft upper material can accommodate the bony prominence so that it does not rub and cause irritation. Shoe repair shoes have a device called a ball and ring stretcher, which can stretch the shoe so that it does not rub against the bunion.

Padding can be made of felt or rubber material in order to provide comfortable cushioning.

If conservative care is not successful, surgery may be necessary. Surgery may be performed as an outpatient procedure at a surgery center or the hospital. During surgery, the bony prominence is removed and the toe is straightened.

After surgery, it is necessary to elevate the foot to prevent swelling and discomfort. A special surgical shoe or a cast is worn for four to six weeks or until a regular shoe can be worn.

Bunions are a common foot ailment. Fortunately, there are various treatment options to alleviate this foot problem.