

## Orthopaedics – Forefoot surgery including bunion, hallux rigidus and lesser toe surgery

### Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. We know that it can be very difficult for many people who are waiting.

The NHS is working hard to see people as quickly as possible, but it is going to take a while before waiting times are back down to where there were before the Covid-19 pandemic began in the UK in early 2020.

This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

### Guidance for Patients

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your Doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment.

Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or Doctor's surgery.

Whilst you are waiting for your toe surgery, it is important that you wear the **right shoes** to reduce your bunion pain and slow the progress of the bunion. Incorrect footwear can hasten the bunion's progress. Choose **shoes with a rounded, wide toe box** and this will reduce the pressure on your bunion and help you feel more comfortable walking around. **Avoid high heels** and shoes with pointy and narrow toe box and wear shoes with **supportive soles** that fit your arches. **Avoid flat shoes** with virtually no sole and flip flops. Adding arch support and hindfoot and midfoot control can correct the foot position and slow the progression of a bunion. A **custom orthotic insert** can take the pressure of the bunion to improve the symptoms. Another great option for dealing with bunion discomfort is bunion padding which can be purchased over the counter. There are several options available, including **silicone gel sleeves** to cushion the bunion from the inside of your

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shoe, **moleskin** to eliminate the rubbing between the inside of your shoe and your skin, and toe spacers which are placed between the big toe and second toe to help with toe alignment. **NSAIDs** (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) can be applied topically, taken orally and topical compound creams which contain the same pain relief drugs found in oral medication but compounded to be applied directly to the skin.

When your bunion is making activity uncomfortable, the last thing you might feel like doing is exercising. But you would be surprised how much **range-of-motion exercises** can help you feel better. A **bunion splint** or can straighten a big toe joint that you can wear at night. They help to keep the joint stretched out to avoid stiffening in the misaligned position. They can also slow the progress of your bunion. Similarly, a **toe splint** can be worn for the lesser toes to help with walking and to reduce the rubbing of the toes while walking.

## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

### Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

### GP surgeries

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments

GP surgeries are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

## Contact Us

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