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Everything You Should Know About Tailor's Bunion

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What is tailor's bunion?

A tailor's bunion, also called a bunionette, is a bony lump that forms along the side of the little toe. It happens when the fifth metatarsal bone enlarges or shifts outward. The fifth metatarsal is the very bottom bone on the little toe. A bunion can be painful, especially if it rubs against your shoe.

A tailor's bunion is similar to a regular bunion but in a different location. Typical bunions grow on the inside of the foot below the big toe. Tailor's bunions grow on the outside of the foot at the base of the little toe.

Tailor's bunions aren't as common as regular bunions. In one [study](#) presented at the American College of Rheumatology annual meeting, researchers examined participants with foot disorders. Just 4 percent of the study population had a tailor's bunion while 39 percent had regular bunions.

Symptoms

A tailor's bunion is a swollen bump on the outside of your little toe. The bump might start out small but grow larger with time. It can also be red and painful. The bunion may get more swollen and painful when it rubs against your shoe.

You can get this type of bunion on one or both feet. The bunion on one foot may be worse than the one on the other foot.

Causes

You can get this type of bunion from wearing poorly fitting shoes, such as narrow, high-heeled shoes. You're more likely to get tailor's bunion if you've inherited a structural foot problem from your parents. This problem could be that the bone in your little toe is in an abnormal position or the head of the bone is enlarged, which causes the bone to move out of place.

Other causes include:

- a foot that leans to the outside (inverted foot)
- loose ligaments in your foot
- lower-than-normal fifth metatarsal bone
- tight calf muscles

A tailor's bunion usually starts when you're young and gradually gets worse with time. By the time you reach your 40s, the bunion may be painful.

Did you know?

Tailor's bunion got its name hundreds of years ago, when tailors would sit cross-legged with the outside edges of their feet pressed against the ground. As a tailor's little toe rubbed against the ground, a bump would form at the base of the toe.

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How it's diagnosed

A podiatrist should be able to diagnose tailor's bunion just by looking at your foot. An X-ray can show problems with the bone of your little toe.

How to treat it at home

Some simple modifications can help relieve the pain of a tailor's bunion, although they won't get rid of the bump. Try these remedies:

- Put a silicone bunion pad over the tailor's bunion to relieve pain and prevent the bunion from rubbing against your shoe.
- Wear shoes that are flexible and have a wide toe box. Avoid wearing narrow, pointed shoes and high heels.
- Hold ice to your foot for 5 to 10 minutes up to 3 times per day.
- Take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) to bring down swelling and relieve pain.
- Do calf stretches twice per day. Stand facing a wall with your toes pointing toward the wall. Step back with the affected leg to stretch the calf. Hold the position for 30 to 60 seconds.

Other treatment options

When home treatments don't relieve the bunion, your doctor might give you injections of a corticosteroid around your little toe joint. Corticosteroids help bring down swelling. Your doctor might also recommend a custom-made shoe insert to cushion the bunion and prevent pain.

If the pain and swelling don't go away, or if you can't wear normal shoes because the tailor's bunion has grown so large, surgery may be an option. Bunionette surgery is an outpatient procedure, so you go home on the same day as your surgery.

The surgeon will give you anesthesia to prevent pain and then shave off the tissue that is sticking out. Your surgeon might also remove part of the bone in your little toe to straighten out the toe. This procedure is called an [osteotomy](#). The bone will be held in place with a screw, plate, or piece of steel wire.

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Expectations for recovery

After bunionette surgery, you need to keep weight off of the affected foot. You can use crutches or a walker to help you get around. You may have to wear a splint or boot for 3 to 12 weeks to protect your foot while it heals. You'll have to stay home from work for a few weeks, especially if your job involves a lot of walking.

Nonsurgical treatments can often resolve bunion symptoms within 3 to 6 months. With surgery, full recovery can take up to three months. Swelling in the affected toe might take as long as a year to fully go down.

Doing foot and ankle exercises after surgery can help keep your joints flexible while you heal. You might also need physical therapy. [Try out these foot exercises to help strengthen your foot.](#)

Outlook

Surgery successfully fixes the bunion about [85 percent](#) of the time. Sometimes a tailor's bunion can come back after surgery. Wearing narrow shoes after surgery makes the bunion more likely to come back.

How to prevent tailor's bunions

To prevent tailor's bunion, always wear roomy, flexible shoes with a wide toe box. Avoid narrow, pointy shoes that squeeze your toes together. Each time you buy new shoes, get measured to make sure they're roomy enough for your feet.

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