BUNIONS (a.k.a Hallux Valgus)

What is it?
- A bunion = Hallux (Big toe) Valgus (to the outside).
- The great toe is deviated to the outside, creating a prominence on the inside of the forefoot (Figure. #1).
- Bunion deformities can vary greatly in their extent and in the symptoms that they cause.

What causes bunions?
- Bunions occur gradually over time due to the way each foot absorbs force during walking.
- Most patients with bunions have a positive family history.

Clinical Presentation:
Bunion Symptoms can vary in severity from none at all to severe discomfort aggravated by restrictive shoe wear and by standing and walking.
- Pain over the prominent bump on the inside of the forefoot. (Figure #2): 
- And/or: Pain under the area near the base of the second toe. (Figure #2): 
Symptoms can vary in severity from none at all to severe discomfort aggravated by standing and walking.
- NO direct correlation between the size of the bunion and the patient’s symptoms.
- Symptoms are often exacerbated by restrictive shoe wear, particularly shoes with a narrow toe box or an uncomfortable, stiff, restraining upper.
- Patients with bunions often have a positive family history.

NON-OPERATIVE TREATMENT
The initial treatment of a bunion should be non-operative. Although bunions cannot be eliminated without surgery excellent resolution of symptoms is often possible with simple non-operative interventions. Non-operative treatment may include:

Comfort shoes. Shoes with a wide non-constrictive toebox, especially one that is made out of a soft material such as leather, can be quite helpful in reducing the irritation over the prominent bunion. In some instances, it is helpful to have a shoemaker stretch the inside aspect of the shoe.

Bunion pads that cover the painful prominence may also be helpful in decreasing the symptoms associated with the bunion. These pads can be obtained at many drugstores.

A toe spacer placed between the great toe and the second toe can help to reduce the bunion deformity and, thereby, decrease the bunion symptoms.

Over-the-counter accommodative orthotics may also help bunion symptoms. Orthotics with a slight arch built in may be particularly helpful if bunion symptoms are associated with the sole of the forefoot.