



Bunionette Surgery

A Patient Information Guide

What is a Bunionette?

A bunionette — also known as a Tailor's bunion — is a painful bony bump that develops on the outer side of the foot, at the base of the little (5th) toe. It gets its nickname from tailors of old, who would sit cross-legged for long periods, placing pressure on the outside of their feet.

The bump forms when the bone behind the little toe deviates outward, enlarging the joint and causing it to rub painfully against the inside of shoes. This friction leads to soreness, swelling, and often makes finding comfortable footwear a real challenge.



Clinical appearance of a bunionette



Location of the Tailor's bunion on the 5th toe joint

Managing a Bunionette Without Surgery

In many cases, simple changes can ease the discomfort of a bunionette and delay or avoid the need for surgery altogether. These include:

- Choosing wide, roomy footwear that doesn't compress the toes
- Avoiding pointed or narrow shoes and high heels
- Using a bunionette pad or silicone splint to cushion and protect the joint
- Anti-inflammatory pain relief (such as ibuprofen) to manage flare-ups
- Orthotics or shoe inserts to redistribute pressure away from the joint



These measures won't correct the underlying bone alignment, but they can make a meaningful difference to day-to-day comfort. Surgery is only considered once conservative options have been genuinely tried and symptoms continue to interfere with your quality of life.

When is Surgery Recommended?

Surgery becomes an option when conservative measures have been exhausted and the bunionette is still causing persistent pain or limiting your activities and footwear choices.

A few things worth knowing when considering surgery:

- If you have bunionettes on both feet, it is best to treat one side at a time, allowing you to recover comfortably while remaining mobile.
- Bunionette surgery can often be combined with other procedures on the same foot — such as bunion correction or hammer toe surgery — in a single operation, avoiding the need for two separate recoveries.

Dr Maritz will discuss your individual situation in detail and help you decide whether surgery is the right step for you.

What Does the Surgery Involve?

Dr Maritz uses the latest **minimally invasive technique** to correct bunionettes. This means no large incisions — instead, a small keyhole cut is made over the joint, and a fine precision instrument is used to carefully reposition the bone.

What makes this approach unique is that the bone is not fixed with screws. This is intentional: the natural forces of walking gently guide the bone into its correct position over the weeks that follow. Because of this, it is actually essential that you walk on the foot straight away after surgery — this is how the bone finds its new alignment.

The bone typically heals fully within 4 - 6 weeks, but is comfortable to walk on from the moment you leave the operating theatre.



Your Recovery

Recovery from minimally invasive bunionette surgery is straightforward, and most patients are pleasantly surprised by how manageable it is.

Recovery at a Glance

Immediately after surgery

- Walk immediately in a flat postoperative shoe — full weight-bearing is not just permitted, it is essential
- Keep bandages clean and dry for the first week
- Bandages and the single suture are removed at your first postop visit with Dr Maritz

Weeks 1 to 6

- Continue wearing the flat postoperative shoe for 6 weeks
- At 6 weeks, Dr Maritz will assess your healing clinically — X-rays are not routinely required
- Once cleared at 6 weeks, you can transition back into normal, comfortable footwear

Supporting Your Recovery

The steps below will help your bone heal well and keep your recovery on track:

- Do not smoke. Smoking significantly impairs bone healing and wound repair.
- Take Vitamin D and calcium supplements as directed — these are important for strong bone healing.
- Eat a nutritious, well-balanced diet to give your body the nutrients it needs to heal.
- Take your prescribed pain medication regularly, particularly in the first few days after surgery.
- Keep your toes moving with gentle exercises, and perform the knee exercises recommended by your physiotherapist.

Important: When to Contact Us

If you have any concerns at all following your surgery — about pain levels, the wound, swelling, or anything else — please contact Dr Maritz's rooms directly. Early contact allows us to address any concern quickly and keep your recovery on course.