



Minimally Invasive Bunion Surgery

A Patient Information Guide

What is a Bunion?

A bunion — known medically as hallux valgus — is a bony prominence that develops on the inner side of the big toe. It forms when the big toe gradually drifts inward, pushing the joint outward and creating that familiar painful bump.

Over time, the constant pressure from footwear can cause rubbing, inflammation, and discomfort. In more advanced cases, the big toe may push against the second toe, causing it to ride up or cross over — a condition called a “crossover toe.”



Clinical appearance of a bunion



Normal

Deformed joint

Normal joint vs. hallux valgus deformity

Do I Need Surgery?

Not every bunion requires an operation. If your bunion is not causing significant pain or affecting your quality of life, conservative measures are often all that is needed:

- Toe strapping and padding to reduce pressure
- Appropriate, wide-fitting footwear
- Anti-inflammatory medication and orthotic insoles

Surgery is only recommended when these measures no longer provide relief and the bunion is significantly impacting your daily life. When surgery is indicated, the bones need to be carefully repositioned and held in place with small screws.

Traditional open bunion surgery involved long incisions, was often quite painful, carried a risk of toe stiffness, and required extended periods of limited weight-bearing. Fortunately, surgical techniques have advanced considerably.



What is Minimally Invasive Bunion Surgery?

Dr Maritz specialises in a keyhole (minimally invasive) approach to bunion correction. Rather than large incisions, tiny precise cuts are used to gently reposition the bone — achieving the same correction with significantly less disruption to the surrounding tissue.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Significantly less pain after surgery
- Reduced stiffness and a more natural range of motion
- Immediate weight-bearing in a protective shoe — no crutches needed
- Smaller, neater scars that are far less noticeable

You can view an animated explanation of the technique here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ZsraFolRp4>

Further information is also available at:

www.bunionpain.com

Dr Maritz has gained extensive experience in minimally invasive surgery, and teaches and trains surgeons both locally and internationally on these novel techniques.

What Results Can I Expect?

The evidence supporting minimally invasive bunion surgery continues to grow, with studies from around the world consistently demonstrating outcomes that are at least comparable to traditional open surgery — and often better. Most patients experience less postoperative pain, a faster return to normal footwear, and an earlier return to their daily activities.

The recurrence rate of traditional open surgery remains very high (+/- 30%), but the recurrence rate of a minimally invasive technique is less than 1%.



Your Recovery Journey

Surgery is performed as a day procedure — you will be able to go home the same day. Your foot will be comfortably numb from local anaesthetic, and you will be sent home with appropriate pain relief.

Recovery at a Glance

Immediately after surgery

- Walk immediately in a stiff-soled postoperative shoe (provided for you)
- Elevate the foot for 40 minutes out of every hour to control swelling
- Keep bandages in place and dry until your first postop visit (around day 7–10)
- Showering is fine — a waterproof bag (available from pharmacies) will protect your dressing

Follow-up appointments

- Week 1–2: First postop visit to check the wound and guide you on bandaging technique
- 6 weeks: Second review appointment
- 6 months: Final follow-up to confirm full healing

Return to normal activities

- Postop protective shoe worn for 6 weeks, then transition to normal shoes
- Desk-based work: return after approximately 2 weeks
- Standing or walking work: at least 6 weeks
- Driving (left foot, automatic car): from 2 weeks | Driving (right foot): from 6 weeks
- Running and impact sport: from 3 months



Post Operative shoe to be worn



Understanding the Risks

All surgical procedures carry some degree of risk. Dr Maritz will discuss these with you in detail at your consultation. The specific risks associated with minimally invasive bunion surgery include:

- Swelling — some degree of swelling is normal and may persist for 3–6 months. This is managed well with elevation, ice, and proper bandaging.
- Wound complications — infection or scar sensitivity are uncommon, occurring in less than 1% of cases.
- Bone healing problems — delayed or incomplete bone healing is rare (less than 1%).
- Nerve sensitivity — temporary altered sensation around the toe is possible. Permanent numbness along the side of the toe occurs in 1–2% of patients, and is rarely troublesome.
- Recurrence or under-correction — with modern minimally invasive techniques, this risk has reduced considerably to less than 1%.
- Hardware irritation — occasionally the small screws used to hold the bone may cause irritation and require removal; this occurs in 2–3% of patients.

How to Support Your Recovery

A few simple steps will help you heal as quickly and comfortably as possible:

- Do not smoke. Smoking significantly impairs bone and wound healing.
- Take Vitamin D and calcium supplements as directed — these support healthy bone repair.
- Eat a nutritious, balanced diet to give your body the building blocks it needs.
- Take your prescribed pain medication regularly, especially in the first few days.
- Perform regular gentle toe movements and knee exercises as shown by your physiotherapist.

Important: When to Contact Us

If you have any concerns after surgery — whether about pain, the wound, swelling, or anything else — please contact Dr Maritz's rooms directly. Do not wait to see your GP first. Early communication helps us address any issue promptly and keeps your recovery on track.