

# Bunion surgery ends years of foot pain



FHCN PHOTO BY NERISSA JOHNSON

## AT WORK.

Robin can now walk down the hospital corridor without the bunion pain that accompanied her for years.

“When I was 10 years old I had minor surgery on my left foot,” relates Robin Bouffard. “I can still remember the podiatrist telling my parents that someday I would have trouble with my right foot, too.”

Robin’s podiatrist was right. Robin developed an uncomfortable bunion on that right foot, and as she grew up and entered the workforce, Robin’s career choice made her foot problem even more painful.

“I’m a certified registered nurse,” explains Robin. “I’ve spent a lot of time on my feet aggravating that bunion.

## Melissa C. Verde, DPM

Now, I’m the assistant manager of the medical surgical unit at South Seminole Hospital, but I still spend long days walking our hallways. My bunion became so pronounced that my great toe looked like it was pointing off to the right.”

Robin admits that she had considered surgical options for removing her bunion as far back as her college days. “It was always so painful,” she remembers, “and it was worse when the weather was cold.”

Even so, she hesitated, allowing first her studies, then her career, then life in general to push surgery to the sidelines.

When Robin observed Melissa C. Verde, DPM, visiting Robin’s patients following foot surgeries, she again considered having her painful bunion removed.

“Dr. Verde’s office is close to the hospital, and she was over here three or four times a day visiting her patients and checking on their progress,” says Robin. “I was so impressed with her approach to patient care, as well as with the outcomes she achieved for her patients, that I decided the time was right to solve my own problem. My husband and my supervisor both encouraged me to have the surgery.”

## About bunions

Dr. Verde explains that a bunion results when a patient’s gait flattens the arch of the foot, causing the foot to roll and weakening the tendon that stabilizes the great toe. As the bunion develops, it causes a misalignment of the joints of the great toe.

This results in unequal distribution of pressure on the foot when walking and can additionally lead to the formation of calluses and development of another painful condition called *hammertoe*.

“The development of bunions is often genetic. If a person’s parents or grandparents had bunions, he or she may well develop them, too,” informs Dr. Verde. “Medical conditions like rheumatoid arthritis or joint trauma can also cause bunions. Inappropriate footwear isn’t usually a causative factor, but it can increase the discomfort of bunions.”

In fact, it is the discomfort of a bunion, rather than the deformed appearance of the great toe, that usually causes a patient to consider treatment options.

In some cases, a bunion can be treated conservatively with changes in activity and footwear, hot or cold compresses, physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medications, and cortisone injections to relieve pain.

When conservative methods fail, Dr. Verde then considers surgical options. “I have extensive experience in foot surgery, particularly in treating the forefoot,” she notes. “The majority of foot surgeries I perform treat hammertoes, bunions, the inflamed tissue of neuromas, and plantar fasciitis.”

In severe cases, bunions can be eliminated with a simple surgical procedure that removes the bone of prominence and treats the tendon restricting the great toe, allowing the joint to straighten and relieving painful symptoms.

“It was obvious when I examined Robin’s foot that conservative methods and a simple treatment of the tendon were not appropriate options for her,” states Dr. Verde. “Robin’s bunion had caused a severe deformity in the joint of the great toe. The surgery she required would involve cutting the tendon and making a break in the bone to reshape the foot and to realign the toe, as well as removing the bony protrusion of the joint.”

## Welcome relief

Even though Robin’s surgery was more involved than most bunion procedures, Robin says she approached her surgery with confidence.

“Two weeks after I had my initial consultation, we scheduled my surgery,” says Robin. “Several people told me I should expect a painful recovery, but I had a lot of faith in Dr. Verde, so I wasn’t too worried. The hospital staff took great care of me, of course, and even brought my family to visit me in the pre-op area before I was given my sedation. I remember being in the operating suite, and the hospital staff talking to me; then the next thing I knew they were waking me up and telling me it was all over.

“My surgery was on a Friday in mid-September,” continues Robin, “and by Saturday I was back home, keeping my foot elevated and iced and following Dr. Verde’s postoperative instructions.”

“Robin’s joint deformity was pronounced,” reminds Dr. Verde, “so I didn’t want her up and walking right away. I protected her foot with an aircast to guard against

the small bumps and knocks that occur so easily in anyone’s daily routine.

“My goal in performing this surgery was to relieve Robin’s pain, correct her joint deformity, and return her to her regular activities as soon as possible with proper anatomic appearance and proper function of her foot.”

Robin says that is exactly what Dr. Verde accomplished.

“The Monday following my surgery I was enjoying lunch out with my husband,” she reports. “I wasn’t walking on my own: I used crutches and a wheelchair to get around the mall, and I was careful about my foot. But I was up and about.

“I expected some pain,” Robin admits, “but I have to tell you: There was no pain at all. And I mean *no pain*.”

In addition to returning to her normal activities without the pain from her bunion, Robin says there was one additional goal she had for her surgery.

“I have an 18-year-old daughter, and I was always so jealous of the beautiful little shoes she was able to wear,” confides Robin. “Shoes like that were never an option for me, so when I scheduled my bunion surgery, my family bought me a big gift certificate so I could go shoe shopping.

“If I had realized this surgery would be so easy and painless, I would have done it 25 years ago.” **FHCN**—Billie S. Noakes



**Before.** Robin’s bunion caused her a lifetime of pain and caused severe deformity of the joint on her great toe.



**After!** A bunionectomy skillfully performed by Dr. Verde relieved Robin’s pain and restored a natural appearance to her foot.

## Step away from foot pain

Dr. Verde is accepting new patients and welcomes the opportunity to answer your questions about foot health. For further information or to schedule an appointment, please call (407) 332-6700. Her office is located at 521 W. State Road 434, Suite #300, in Longwood.

Melissa C. Verde, DPM, completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, and received her doctor of podiatric medicine degree from the Dr. William M. Scholl School of Podiatric Medicine, Chicago, IL. Dr. Verde completed a rotating podiatric residency and a 12-month podiatric surgical residency at Larkin Community Hospital, South Miami. She is affiliated with Orlando Regional Healthcare—South Seminole, Longwood, and Florida Hospital—Altamonte, Altamonte Springs. Dr. Verde is a member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, American Podiatric Medical Association, and Florida Podiatric Medical Association.