

Flat Feet in Children

Information for patients

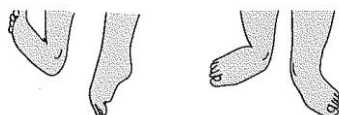
Parents worry about flat feet, but **flat feet are normal in infants, children and adults**. Wearing special shoes, inserts, wedges, or doing exercises **will not** create an arch in a child with a flexible flat foot.

Most children develop an arch by about the age of six. However, **one in five children never develop an arch**. Most adults with flexible flat feet have strong, pain free feet with no long-term problems.

The arch can be seen when feet are hanging free, or when a child stands on their toes.



In infants, the baby fat pad in the foot hides the developing arch.



Young children often have low arches because they are loose-jointed. The arch flattens when they are standing and their feet seem to be rolled in and their feet pointed outward.

Just as children are different heights, arches have different heights, too.

If the flat foot is stiff, painful or very severe then you may need professional advice.

Treatment

The following daily exercises may help to develop strength in the feet:

- Rising up onto tiptoes - hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat 5 times.
- Picking things up with toes - this could be a towel, a pen, marbles etc. Aim for 10 repetitions.
- Balance on one leg - make sure the hips don't wobble and aim to hold for 30 seconds.

Always allow children to go barefoot as much as possible, especially around the house. This encourages the feet to get stronger.

Treatment of flat feet may be needed if there is associated prolonged foot or leg pain. Stretching the Achilles tendon and massaging the lower legs and feet can help with the tightness commonly associated with growing pains. Wearing supportive shoes with a low, broad heel and secure lace/Velcro/buckle fastenings and a cushioned insole may also help.

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