Flat Feet in Children

Is my child's flat foot normal?

Tips from your podiatrist at Ace Sports Medicine

ACE SPORTS MEDICINE
UPPER MOUNT GRAVATT

Most flat feet in young children are a normal stage of development. The arch grows through the primary-school years. Knowing the difference between a flexible and a rigid flat foot tells you whether anything needs doing.

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FLAT FEET

1 WHAT IT IS

The inside arch of the foot sits low or touches the ground when the child stands. In young children this is the expected shape of a developing foot.

A LOW ARCH IN A PRESCHOOLER IS USUALLY NORMAL.

2 HOW COMMON

In a study of 835 children aged 3 to 6, 44 percent had flexible flat feet. The rate fell from 54 percent at age 3 to 24 percent at age 6 as arches developed.

THE ARCH APPEARS WITH GROWTH IN MOST CHILDREN.

3 THE TIPTOE TEST

Ask your child to stand flat, then rise onto tiptoes. If an arch appears on tiptoes and there is no pain, that is a flexible flat foot: the normal kind.

ARCH ON TIPTOES PLUS NO PAIN EQUALS NORMAL.

4 THE EXCEPTIONS

A flat foot that stays flat on tiptoes, is stiff, painful, on one side only, or comes with limping or tripping is the exception that warrants assessment.

RIGID, PAINFUL OR ONE-SIDED NEEDS A LOOK.

5 ORTHOTICS

In-shoe supports are not needed for painless flexible flat feet. They are considered when the foot is symptomatic, and the study authors noted many treatments were unnecessary.

TREAT SYMPTOMS, NOT THE SHAPE.

6 WHAT HELPS

Barefoot play on varied surfaces, shoes that bend at the ball of the foot, a healthy body weight, and targeted care only if there are symptoms.

LET THE FOOT MOVE AND GROW.

DOES MY CHILD NEED ORTHOTICS?

Usually not. A flexible, painless flat foot is expected to improve with growth. A podiatrist can confirm the foot is flexible, check footwear, and only recommend supports or exercises when there are symptoms or a rigid foot.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

- Foot, leg or knee pain with walking or play
- Limping, tripping or asking to be carried
- A flat foot on one side only
- The foot stays flat on tiptoes or feels stiff
- No arch appearing by around age eight
- Concerns about footwear or walking pattern

Reluctance to walk or a sudden change in walking should be assessed promptly.

WHAT CAN A PODIATRIST DO?

- Check whether the flat foot is flexible or rigid
- Assess walking, balance and joint range
- Advise on shoes that suit a growing foot
- Recommend supports only when symptoms warrant it
- Provide simple strength and balance activities
- Review as your child grows

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

If you are wondering about your child's feet, start here:

Try the tiptoe test at home | **Choose flexible, well-fitting shoes** | **Encourage barefoot play** | **Book a podiatry check if worried**

Most flexible flat feet need no treatment. Please discuss specifics at an appointment.

Helping You Perform at Your Best

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Need support with your child's flat feet?

Book your appointment today

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