

Flat feet - your child's feet are OK! (1 of 2)



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The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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Date written: August 2008
Review date: September 2021
Version: 2.1
Code: P10059

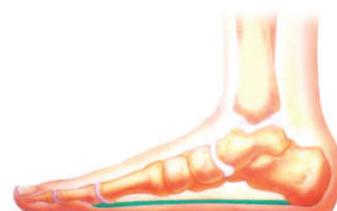
Some children see a physiotherapist because they have flat feet and have associated problems. These can include leg aches, limited walking distance and mild delay in their physical development.

What are flat feet?

Most people's feet have a space on the inner side of the bottom of the foot which is off the ground (the 'arch' of the foot). The height of this arch varies a lot from one person to another. Small children do not have an arch: it develops between the ages of 3 and 10. People who have a low arch, or no arch at all are said to have flat feet. Sometimes they are said to have "fallen arches", but as most of these people have always had a low arch the term is misleading.



Normal Arch



Flat Arch

Childhood flat feet

All toddlers and young children appear to have flat feet. As they learn to stand and walk, children place their weight on the inside edge of their feet. Later, weight bearing through the feet becomes more equal. In time the arches of the foot develop and the feet no longer have a flat appearance.

Some children will have flatter feet as there is a range of normal arch height within the population. Children with flatter feet are very unlikely to have any long term problems associated with their flat feet and can be active and not experience any pain.

What causes flat feet?

Children's ligaments are much more flexible than adults. Ligaments support the structure of joints in our bodies and hold up the arch in the foot. The muscles of the foot need time to develop so that the arches can form.

Children also have more fat in their feet and this affects the shape of the foot.

How you can help:

- As with any child, supportive, well fastened and correctly fitting shoes will help with foot posture and walking. Some children's shoes and trainers have an arch support built into them.

Children's Physiotherapy
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- It is also important that your child plays barefoot whilst indoors as this encourages strengthening of the foot muscles.
- Children should enjoy active play every day, such as going for a walk to the park or playing in the garden. Active play encourages bone growth and muscle strengthening and, in addition, there will be improvements with your child's motor skills and balance.
- Some children who have flat feet and altered alignment of their heel bone may benefit from insoles in their shoes. These children can be referred to podiatry or orthotics for provision of insoles.
- Many children with flat feet are active and do not have any pain, these children do not require physiotherapy. Children who experience foot or leg pain can be referred to physiotherapy by their GP and may need exercises and/or stretches.
- Further information can be found in a publication from the Association of Paediatric Chartered Physiotherapists: "Flat Feet in Young Children". This is available as a pdf download online from <http://apcp.csp.org.uk/>