

Flat feet in children

Flat feet are common in infants and young children. Young children appear to have low arches or flat feet because they have a fat pad hiding the arch. Children are also loose-jointed and flexible, and the developing arch flattens when they are standing. The ankles often appear to “roll in”.

Foot arch

A foot arch is easier to see when the feet are hanging free or the child stands on their tip toes (Fig. 1). This is known as a flexible flat foot.

Most children start to develop an arch when they are standing by the age of five (Fig. 2). It is common for a family history of flat feet in one or both parents.

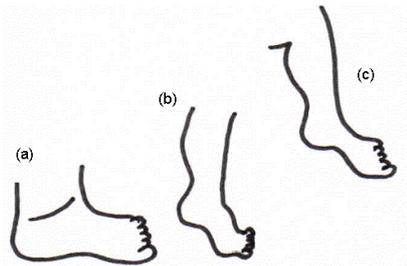


Fig. 1 Viewing an arch in a flexible flat foot
Flexible flat foot (a)
Standing on tip toes (b)
Foot off the ground (c)

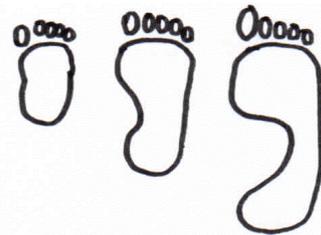


Fig.2 Children develop a foot arch in standing at the age of five

Treatments

Painless and flexible flat feet do not require any treatment. Most adults with flat feet have no long-term problems or pain.

Special shoes, orthotics, splints and exercises have shown to not have any benefit on the development of an arch and are not required. Ensure shoes are comfortable and well fitted.

Summary

- > Flat feet and ankles that roll in are a normal part of childhood and do not require treatment.
- > The usual flexible flat foot causes no symptoms even later in life.
- > Shoe inserts or foot exercises will not make an arch develop.

Visit your child's doctor for a specialist referral if:

- > your child has pain or stiffness in their feet
- > only one foot is affected.

This fact sheet is intended to assist, not replace discussion with your doctor or health care professional. It is intended as a guide only. SA Health do not accept any responsibility and will not be liable for any inaccuracies, omissions, information perceived as misleading, or the success of any treatment regimen detailed in this fact sheet.

For more information

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