

Flatfeet in Children

Advice for Parents and Carers

What are flatfeet?

A foot is described as flat if the inner arch, or instep, is not terribly obvious or present. It may also look like one of the bones of the ankle is more prominent or that the whole foot is turned or tilted outwards.

Should I be Concerned?

Most children have some degree of flat-foot and it is usually quite normal. This is because children have more springy tissues than adults and slightly more fat in the soles of their feet making their feet look flatter. Everyone is different and some children appear to have flatter feet than others. This sort of variation is quite normal.

Very occasionally a flat foot can be a sign of a more serious problem but the doctor will be able to spot this by examining your child.

If only one foot is flat or the foot is painful then it is a good idea to see a doctor. Special tests are not usually needed. If your doctor is happy that there is nothing to worry about then you should consider the appearance of your child's feet as perfectly normal and know that it will not limit your child in any way.

Are There Any Treatments?

Studies have shown that insoles or arch supports do not help the arches of the foot to develop in childhood. We know that without treatment that the majority of children will have normal arches by adulthood. We do not recommend using any insoles or special exercises because we know that the feet will develop normally without them. People did not realise this before which is why you may have heard of all sorts of different treatments being used in the past

For the few that do not develop a normal arch by adulthood, they almost never have any problems with their feet. Occasionally some adults with flexible flat feet can develop ankle or knee pain with sports in which case an arch supporting shoe or insole can be helpful at that stage.

Is There Anything That I Can Do To Help?

There have been some studies that children who did not wear shoes before age 6 always developed normal foot arches as the foot matured. Obviously in Scotland it is not possible to go outside without shoes on very often but where possible you should encourage your child to run around barefoot and on tip-toe since this will strengthen the muscles which help the arches of the foot to develop.