

Flat Feet in children

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Flat Feet

Flat feet in children is usual in nearly all infants and many young children (Fig. 1). Young children have low arches or flat feet because they are loose-jointed and flexible and the arch flattens when they are standing. The ankles often appear to “roll in”.

A foot arch is easier to see when the feet are hanging free or the child stands on their tip toes (Fig.2). This is known as a flexible flat foot.

Most children start to develop an arch when they are standing by the age of six. It is common for a family history of flat feet in one or both parents. Most adults with flat feet have no long-term problems or pain.

Painless and flexible flat feet do not require any treatment. 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.

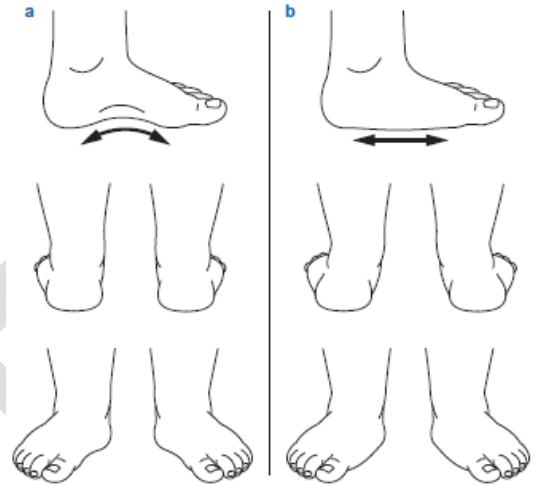


Figure 1. Children's feet may have an arch (a)

Flat feet appear flat with no arch (b)

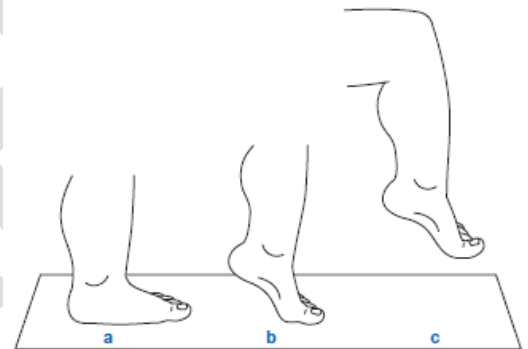


Figure 2. In flexible flat feet (a) an arch is seen when standing on tip-toes (b) and when the feet are off the ground (c)

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 if to get specialist referral if:

- Your child has pain or stiffness in their feet
- Only one foot is affected
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