

In-toeing in children

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In-toeing is common in infants and young children. The feet are turned inwards and is noticeable when the child walks. Most children outgrow this condition without any treatment. Children may be observed to trip and fall more frequently but often this is more related to overall coordination skills. The 3 common causes of in-toeing are described below.

1. Metatarsus adductus (banana feet)

In metatarsus adductus the feet curve inwards (Fig.1). In infants the feet are flexible and improve without treatment by the age of two years. Gentle stretching exercises may help in the first few months. In severe cases, a short period of casting by a paediatric physiotherapist may be required.

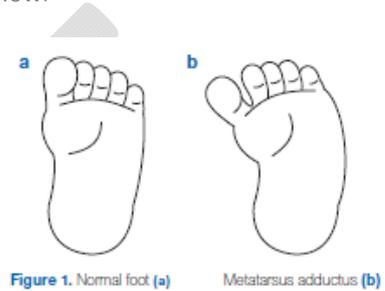


Figure 1. Normal foot (a) Metatarsus adductus (b)

2. Internal tibial torsion (twist in of shin bones)

Internal tibial torsion is where the shin bone (tibia) of the leg twists inwards between the knee and foot (Fig. 2). This is usually due to the positioning in the womb. The bone usually untwists as the child grows and is usually self-corrected by school age.

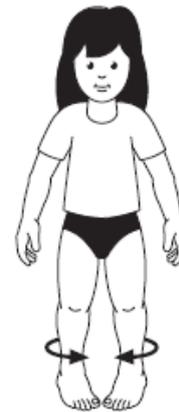


Figure 2. Internal tibial torsion – when the lower leg turns inwards between the knee and ankle

3. Internal femoral torsion (twist in of thigh bone)

Internal femoral torsion is where the thigh bone is twisted inwards between the hip and knee (Fig. 3). This is normal in children and usually corrects itself gradually by the age of 12 years years.

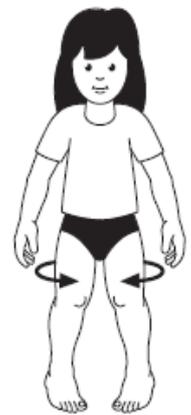


Figure 3. Internal femoral torsion – when the thigh bone turns inwards between the hip and the knee

Special shoes, splints, bracing and exercises do not affect the untwisting of the shin or thigh bone and are not required.

Summary

- In-toeing is a normal stage of a child's development that corrects over time.
- In-toeing only requires treatment in severe cases or it exceeds the normal age range
- Special shoes or braces DO NOT help internal tibial torsion or internal femoral torsion

Visit your child's doctor to get a specialist referral if:

- The child has a limp or pain in their legs
- Only one leg is affected
- In-toeing is considered severe and not improving over time
- The feet are stiff and not improving with time
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