

Children's Feet



9 facts every parent should know

Fact 1 **Tiny babies have fat feet.**

It's one of those weird quirks of Mother Nature so don't panic. Babies are born with a fatty pad in the arch of the foot that gradually disappears as walking commences so just be patient. If you're wondering about walking development, babies generally commence walking between the ages of nine and eighteen months with thirteen months being the average.

Fact 2 **It is normal for children to be bow-legged until two years of age.**

The bow-legged stage is then followed by a knock knee stage until about age seven. Having said that, a visit to the podiatrist is still good insurance if you feel your child isn't walking properly.

Fact 3 **Pigeon Toes are common in children.**

Usually arriving after the child begins walking, and generally more common in girls than boys, Pigeon Toes are caused by poor bone alignment or excessive 'muscle pull'. This can occur at any point from the hip to the foot and is often genetic in nature. Early treatment provides encouraging results with various treatments available:

1: Splints can be employed to hold the feet and legs in a more normal position.

2: Shoe modifications can be used for mild cases.

3: An insert called a 'gait plate' can be placed inside school shoes to redirect the foot. Gait plates are available from your podiatrist.

Fact 4 **Flat feet are hereditary.**

They can cause aching ankles, aching arches or 'growing pains' in the legs and are caused by muscles stretching from overwork.

Where flat feet are very noticeable strong footwear should be worn. Leather boots are advisable from day one.

Our podiatrist can check your shoes for you to ensure they are helping, not hindering your foot condition.

Additional support should also be considered in the form of orthotic inserts that fit inside the boot or shoe.

This therapy provides added protection by increasing muscle strength during growth years.

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Fact 5

Exercise develops strength in foot bones, muscles and joints.

Having said this, exercise also places additional stress on feet. Possibly the most common sports-related problem in young feet occurs at the back and side of the heel bone. Children usually complain of this pain during or after sport. It tends to settle in a few hours only to reappear following the next sports session. It most commonly occurs in ages 7-13 affecting both boys and girls. It is a growth problem called "Severs Disease" and may lead to limping if untreated.

If your child suffers from Severs Disease we advise the following:

- 1:** Reduce activity, particularly activities with lots of running, i.e. football, cross country running and cricket.
- 2:** Ice the painful area, this will reduce inflammation.
- 3:** Raise the heel in the shoe approximately 6mm.
- 4:** Seek podiatry help if these simple measures do not provide relief.

Fact 6

The major cause of ingrowing nails is incorrect cutting.

Nails should be cut straight across to the edge of the nail, not down the side. Some nail shapes do curl and seem to grow into the skin though. These nail shapes should be treated by the podiatrist to avoid ingrowing nails and possible infection.

Fact 7

Plantar Warts are growths on the foot caused by a virus.

They may or may not be painful, but often callouses will develop over the warts making diagnosis difficult. Sometimes warts resolve without any treatment, however generally they spread.

Treatments may consist of regular applications of acid, electro-cautery, liquid nitrogen, or surgical excision (though this procedure is not recommended on weight-bearing areas of the foot). Thongs should be worn in the shower to avoid infecting others.

Fact 8

Barefoot is not always best.

Whilst running around without shoes proves helpful in allowing young feet to strengthen, shoes are often necessary. Only good fitting shoes will assist the healthy growth of your children's feet though, so here are some helpful tips to ensure your child's shoes are doing them good:

1: Room for Growth

Shoes can be checked for length by cutting a strip of cardboard exactly the same size as the inside measurement of the shoe (from heel to toe). Remove the cardboard and place the foot on it.

There should be a 5mm clearance to give your child's foot room to grow.

2: A strong shoe

To help young bones develop in proper alignment a strong shoe is encouraged.

The area around the heel bone is called the heel counter and should be tested for strength before purchase.

The stronger the better. Young feet are often hot feet and will always benefit from being surrounded by natural materials such as leather.

Natural stock fibres like cotton or wool will complement the leather shoe. If excessive foot odour results consult your podiatrist.

Fact 9

Don't think the best.

We don't say this to frighten you, but it is a fact that many adult foot problems could have been avoided.

A simple lack of attention and late diagnosis resulted in unnecessary pain. You only get one chance to enjoy healthy feet so insist on early diagnosis and treatment. It's a lifetime investment that you won't regret.

Comfort & Fit are happy to recommend a podiatrist in your area, all you need to do is ask.

Alternatively you can telephone one of our stores to obtain some free advice as we have podiatrists in-store every week.

