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Information for Patients

A Guide to Flat Feet

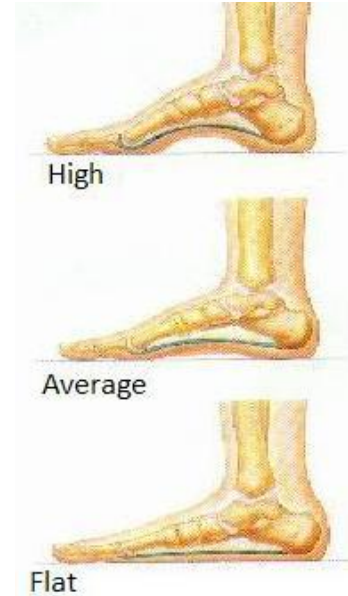
Children's Physiotherapy Service

What are flat feet?

The term "flat feet" describes the shape of the arch on the inside of your foot. If you have flat feet it means the arch on the inside of your foot looks low or flat on the floor. The arch shape can look like these pictures on the right

Before the age of three, all children have flat feet, as the arch on the inside of the foot does not begin to develop until later. Even in older children flat feet do not usually cause any problems.

You might also hear people in the hospital call flat feet "pes planus", "pes valgus", fallen "arches" or "pronated feet". These words all mean "flat feet".



What causes flat feet?

In young children, feet look flat due to the fatty padding in the arch of the foot.

Flat feet are generally caused by slightly longer ligaments in your feet. This causes the arch to fall when you stand up which is why flat feet are sometimes called "fallen arches". Your foot arches may be there when you sit, but disappear when you stand up.



Will I need treatment?

If you do not have any problems with your feet then do not worry, as you do not need any treatment. However, if you have foot, ankle or knee pain or poor balance, then your GP can have a look and refer to someone who may be able to help. This may be a Podiatrist or Orthotist.

What kind of treatment is there?



If you are having trouble with your feet, you may be given an insole to help support your arches. This can help with your balance, or any pain you have had. You may have to wear the insoles for a few years, or sometimes permanently, if the problem does not go away by itself.

Will anything make it worse?

No, you can do all of the things you like to do. People who have studied flat feet found that wearing particular shoes, running, jumping or doing foot exercises will not help.

If you have flat feet, don't worry; it's not abnormal! Some people are tall, some are short and some have flat feet and some have high arches.



References:

Mosca VS. Flexible flatfoot in children and adolescents. J Child Orthop. April 2010 V.4(2)

Sullivan JA. Paediatric flatfoot-evaluation and management. J Am Acad Orthop Surg. 1

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