

Patient information

Flat feet in children

What are flat feet?

A flat foot occurs when the medial arch of the foot is not present, and the heel sits into a valgus position (rolls inwards).

Children with flat feet are usually asymptomatic (no pain or limitations).

A flexible flatfoot is one of the most common presentations in children. This describes a loss of the medial arch of the foot with valgus alignment of the heel on standing. When on tiptoes, the arch is recreated and the heel swings into varus (its normal position).



Left photos shows flexible flat feet on standing with collapse of the medial arch and valgus heel position.

Right photos show the same feet on tiptoes with restoration of the arch and heel position.

What causes flat feet?

Flexible flat feet are normal variants caused by increased flexibility of the joints and ligaments of the foot. This is present in 90% of 1-year olds and up to 20% of adults. The arch of the foot usually takes up until 12 years of age to completely develop.

Role of the medial arch is to create stability and shock absorption (springs) in the foot.

Will my child need treatment?

Flexible flat feet are normal in children. They do not require treatment unless symptomatic.

Physiotherapy assessment and treatment

If there are concerns with pain, muscular tightness, activity levels affected or concerns with asymmetry or rigidity then a physiotherapy assessment will be necessary to support ongoing management and advice.

Sources of information

[Flat Feet in Children V3.pdf \(csp.org.uk\)](#)

[Flat feet - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

[Musculoskeletal \(MSK\) Therapy Services – East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust \(esht.nhs.uk\)](#)

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Disclaimer

Please note this is a generic ESHT information sheet. If you have specific questions about how this relates to your child, please ask your doctor. Please note this information may not necessarily reflect treatment at other hospitals.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
MSK Physiotherapy Paediatric special interest group, Mrs L Cassidy, Advanced practitioner
MSK Paediatrics, Mrs Jo-anne Dartnell Paediatric Orthopaedic Consultant
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Next review date: December 2025

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