

Flatfoot in Children

Description

- A flatfoot is a foot with a low or absent arch along its inner border. In an otherwise normal child, this condition is known as flexible flatfoot
- Varying degrees of flexible flatfoot are to be expected at some point in a child's life, particularly in the first few years of life
- Despite having the potential to cause the parent much distress, this condition is very common in young individuals and most outgrow the condition with age



Diagnosis

- A general exam of the child is used to make a diagnosis of flexible flatfoot. The exam includes an evaluation of
 - Gait and ability to walk on the heels and tips of toes
 - The degree of laxity in the child's ligaments
 - Neurological status
 - Limb alignment and foot anatomy
- During the exam, the child will be asked to stand on his or her tiptoes. During this stance, the arch will be recreated in individuals with flexible flatfoot
- Radiographic imaging may be used to assess flatfoot severity, but is not typically required in mild cases



1yr



5yrs.



10yrs.



20yrs.

Treatment

- Current medical literature shows no benefit of corrective shoes or arch supports in the treatment of flexible flatfoot.
- In the setting of pain, an ill-fitting shoe is like treating a headache with rock music. On the other hand, a proper fitting athletic shoe is like classical music to help soothe the discomfort. Thus properly fitted athletic shoes are very important in preventing injury and reducing pain
- In some instances, an over-the-counter orthotic may be suggested to provide comfort. Blue Insole Superfeet are fairly inexpensive and widely available (at Sports Chalet, Chick's, REI, and Nordstrom's)
- Surgery is only recommended in rare instances. Most children that require surgical intervention have severe flexible flatfoot and are not considered for surgery until 8 to 9 years of age
- Regardless of the treatment, the child should be regularly checked by his or her orthopaedist to ensure proper bony growth and development





Above is a photo of a 13-year-old boy with severe painful flatfoot. The left foot was successfully treated surgically with a calcaneal cuboid cuneiform osteotomy and gastrocnemius recession.