Children’s Feet - the Key Development Stages

Pre-Walkers, Beginning Walkers and Toddlers

A child’s foot is not just a mini adult foot - it is still developing with relatively soft cartilage and their bones are still forming. Any abnormal, repetitive pressures such as ill fitting shoes, can cause their feet to deform, whereas walking barefoot early in life actually helps feet develop properly and aids proper growth. By giving the toes freedom to move and “grasp”, the feet naturally develop strength and coordination.

Babies footwear is very important to protect their tender feet from cuts and infections from walking outside, on rough floors, surfaces and objects.

Choosing Children’s Shoes
- What to Look For
Shoes should be comfortable from the start.
1) Lightweight
2) Flexible & Soft – no toe or foot mobility restriction
3) Breathable Fabric - leather or canvas - avoid synthetics as they don’t stretch or breathe
4) Flat Shoe - no arch support so as to simulate barefoot conditions for this age group. Arch support can hinder the ability of a child’s foot to strengthen naturally.
5) Smooth Soled - to avoid catching on the ground. Therefore rubber soles are to be avoided.
6) No Heels - at this age children’s feet grow in spurts and require new shoes every 3 to 4 months. Children should not wear ‘hand-me-down’ shoes as they would have molded to the previous child’s foot and therefore could apply abnormal pressure on the feet.

School Aged Children & Their Feet
- Dispelling the Myths

ALL children have flat feet at first and develop a normal arch by age 7. If you think your child may have an arch that is flatter than normal, and may be having problems because of it, have them checked out by your podiatrist as your first step.

Some children suffer foot ailments and development problems and if they are identified early, many conditions can be successfully treated. These young development years for children’s feet will directly effect their strength and mobility in later years.

I encourage you to act now if you have any concerns or questions. Early detection and treatment can make all the difference.
Arch Support for Children
Research shows that arch supports are not beneficial for most children, unless they are getting pain in their feet or legs. There are 3 situations where studies have shown arch supports & orthotics to be beneficial to children.

1. Pathologic Flat Foot:
Children whose arches are flatter than they should be and who also have symptoms due to this, often benefit from arch support and more stable shoes. Symptoms may include foot, leg or knee pain, or foot deformities such as bunion formation.

2. Medical Conditions:
Musculoskeletal or neurologic conditions such as cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, Down Syndrome, etc can benefit from orthotic devices.

3. Overweight:
If a child is carrying more weight than they should, the excess weight can harm the developing foot. Children who are overweight or obese often benefit from the use of arch supports and more comfortable shoes.

Children's Shoe Shops
Children's shoes shouldn't cause blisters or hurt if they are properly designed and fitted. Athletes Foot' and 'Shoes and Sox' are the specialist shoe shops that Feet First podiatrists recommend. They have a large shoe selection and staff are experienced in fitting children’s shoes.

Be sure to take this newsletter with you to the shoe store next time your kids need shoes.