



Flat foot is a way that we described the shape of the foot when the arch on the inner side of the foot that extends from the heel to the base of the big toe is not present. The majority of children between 1-5 years of age have flat feet, it is normal part and stage of foot development and the vast majority - over 95%- of children will develop an arch and grow out of having a flat foot.

There are a small proportion of children that will continue to have flat feet, but only an even smaller number of these will have any problems. Most children who persist in having flat feet participate in normal physical activities and competitive sport and a normal life without experiencing any other pain or symptoms. It is very rare for there to be an underlying problem.

Most of these children will have what is described as a flexible flat foot, which means that when they stand the arch of the foot disappears, but when they sit or go up on to their tip-toes the arch reappears. If the arch does not reappear this is called a rigid flat foot

Is any treatment needed?

There are a number of studies involving large numbers of children which have demonstrated that treated with special shoes, insoles or splints does not change the shape of a child's foot and does not give them an arch. The majority of children under the age of 5 with a flat foot will develop an arch in time without the use of insoles. For some children a small insert in their shoe may help with the way that they wear out their shoe, however, it will not change the shape of the foot in the long run.

After the age of 5 if a flat foot persists and children complain of pain in their feet, then treatment with insoles and arch supports can be used to help their discomfort, but this will not change the foot shape.

In rare cases, pre-teens and young teenagers with persisting symptoms may require further investigation and surgery, for some of the more rare cases that can cause a rigid flat foot.

Conclusion

Flat feet are a normal stage and a normal part of the development in the vast majority of young children and has no long term implications. The use of insoles in such young children with a normal developing foot does not change the shape of the arch of their foot in the long term. Sometimes insoles can be helpful in children who have flat feet AND have pain or discomfort in their foot. Treatment may be needed for older children who have persistently painful flat foot. What is needed to be done for these will depend on the underlying problem causing the flat foot.