



Intoeing

Intoeing is when the feet turn inwards when walking. It is a common normal variant in children. It is often more frequent in girls and whilst it usually corrects it may persist into adulthood. The child may look awkward when walking but there are very rarely any functional problems. Falling is rarely caused by intoeing but is usually part of the process of learning to walk especially in the first 2-3 years. Intoeing rarely needs any corrective measures as it is entirely within the normal spectrum of the human race. There is no evidence that intoeing has any long-term implications.

There are 3 main causes of intoeing.

Femoral torsion

Femoral torsion is an internal twist of the thigh bone. It is most evident between the ages of 2-4 and will usually resolve spontaneously by the age of 10 but may persist. These children often sit with their feet pointing outwards with their bottom between their heels, the so called 'W' position. There is no evidence that this is harmful, and it is usually chosen by the child as it is comfortable to sit in this way. There are no specific exercises, braces or special shoes that can help correct internal femoral torsion. Intoeing is normal in children.

Internal tibial torsion

Internal tibial torsion is a twist of the leg bone below the knee and this is most frequent in boys around the age of 2 and tends to correct itself. It is very common in infancy and childhood, and usually corrects without treatment by the time the child is about eight years old. There are no specific exercises, braces or special shoes that can help.

Metatarsus Adductus

The third and least frequent cause is metatarsus adductus where the foot is curved inwards. This occasionally requires simple treatment. The outside of the foot is normally straight. In metatarsus adductus, the foot curves inwards. Metatarsus adductus is thought to be related to the position of the baby in the mother's uterus. In most babies the foot is quite flexible and improves on its own by the age of two or three. Gentle exercise may help, and you will be shown these by your doctor or a physiotherapist. Some children require shoe inserts or a short period of plaster casting to help straighten their feet.

However, consult your child's doctor if:

- intoeing affects only one leg
- intoeing is severe, and not improving with time
- the feet are stiff and not improving with time.