



Vasu Pai MS, MCh, FRACS

FLATFOOT

Normally foot has a medial arch.

IN 20%, this arch is absent and present with flat foot

Majority of the flatfoot is benign condition and does not require any treatment

Benign flatfoot does not interfere with any activities and should be considered as normal variation

Your doctor will recognise “Pathological flatfoot”

Assessment of Flatfoot

1. Does an arch appear in the foot when your child stands on tiptoes?
2. Children are born with flexible flatfoot, a condition in which the arch of the foot shrinks or disappears when they stand on it.
3. Parents and other family members often worry needlessly that an abnormally low or absent arch in a child's foot will lead to permanent deformities or disabilities: This is not true with benign flatfoot. Most children eventually outgrow flexible flatfoot without any problems.
4. The condition usually:
 - Is painless.
 - Does not interfere with walking or sports participation.

Flatfoot which needs treatment are

1. Flexible flatfoot with a tight heel cord
2. Rigid foot: Look for Neurological or muscular disease.
 - Look for Vertical talus
 - Look for inflammatory arthritis
 - Look for tarsal coalition

Symptoms

A flexible flatfoot has normal muscle function and good joint mobility and is considered normal. The shape of bones and lax ligaments in the foot prevent a strong arch between the toes and heel (longitudinal arch) on weight-bearing.

As the child grows and walks on it, the foot's soft tissues tighten, shaping its arch gradually.

Flexible flatfoot often continues until your child is at least age 5 or older.

If flexible flatfoot continues into adolescence, your child may experience aching pain along the bottom of the foot. See your doctor if your child's flatfeet cause pain.

Treatment Options

Usually no treatment is required

Treatment for flexible flatfoot is required only if your child is experiencing symptoms from the condition.

If your child has activity-related pain or tiredness in the foot/ankle or leg, the doctor may recommend stretching exercises to lengthen the heel cord.

If discomfort continues, your doctor may recommend shoe inserts. Soft-, firm- and hard-molded arch supports may relieve your child's foot pain and fatigue in many cases.

They can also extend the life of his or her shoes, which may otherwise wear unevenly. Sometimes a doctor may prescribe physical therapy or casting if your child has flexible flatfoot with tight heel cords.

Treatment Options: Surgical

Occasionally, surgical treatment can help an adolescent with persistent pain. A small number of flexible flatfeet become rigid instead of correcting with growth. These cases may need further medical evaluation.