

All babies are born with flat feet. They have no fully formed bones and their feet are mainly cartilage. They are soft and flexible making them extremely vulnerable to abnormal pressures.

TIPS FOR HEALTHY FEET

- ❖ Maintain good hygiene.
- ❖ Check for obvious deformity, swelling, redness and so on.
- ❖ Cover baby's feet loosely and avoid tight babygros, sleepsuits, socks and booties.
- ❖ Provide opportunity for exercise - allowing baby to kick freely will prepare legs and feet for weight bearing.

How do I cut my child's toenails and how often should I cut them?

Cut or file the nail following the shape of the end of the toe. Leave approximately 1mm of free edge. The rate of nail growth in children varies so check them weekly.

Walking

Independent walking ranges from the age of 10-18 months. It is unwise to force a child to walk as they may not be ready physically or emotionally. **AVOID baby-walkers as they encourage loading of the joints before they are ready.**

Footwear

Shoes are not necessary for babies or for children learning to walk. Going barefoot or with socks helps the foot to grow normally and develop its musculature and strength.

When should I buy first shoes?

Once the child is walking independently outdoors, they are ready for shoes.

What type of shoe do I choose?

'School shoes' or trainers are ideal. The toe area should fit the shape of the foot and be sufficient in depth to allow the toes to move freely. The heel height should be no more than 4cm with a broad base made from shock-absorbing material. They should fit snugly around the heel and be held on the foot with laces or velcro.

Choosing First Shoes

- ❖ Children's feet should be measured by a trained shoe fitter.
- ❖ Feet should be measured while standing.
- ❖ Shoes should fit and feel comfortable in the shop. They should never require a 'break-in' period.

How often do I need to check the fit?

On average a child's feet grow 2 sizes per year in the first 4 years of life and one size thereafter until growth is complete. To ensure shoes fit properly a trained shoe fitter should check them every 8 weeks. This can be done more frequently if you are aware of a recent growth in your child's height. As growth slows this period can be extended to every 6 months.

Please avoid fashion shoes for babies. They may look cute but they may also have a deforming effect on the development of your baby's feet.