

Children's Feet

Many adult foot problems have their origins in childhood. Considering what we expect of our feet in our lives, a little care and attention in the early stages is a sound investment for the future. Neglecting foot health can also lead to problems on other parts of the body, such as the legs and the back.

Your Baby's Feet

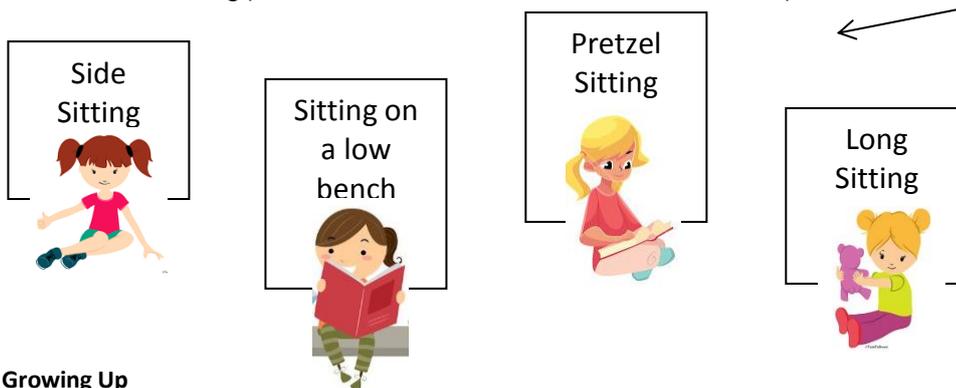
A baby's foot is not simply a smaller version of an adult's. It is shorter and wider and tapers toward the heel. The twenty-six bones of a young child's foot are made of cartilage and the ligaments and muscles are also very flexible. This makes the feet very soft and pliable and thus susceptible to damage. Not all children are born with perfect feet. It is quite common to have overlapping toes, for example, or a particularly curvy shaped foot. These irregularities need to be addressed early before the bones begin to harden, in order to prevent problems later on.

First Steps

Children commence walking usually between ten and eighteen months of age. Shoes aren't usually necessary in the early stages. Allowing your child to walk barefoot or in socks can help improve their muscle development and neurological feedback.

A podiatrist can advise you on footwear and what is most appropriate for your child's level of walking ability and biomechanics.

Sitting positions may also affect your child's foot and leg development. Encourage your children to sit in these positions, rather than "W" sitting (with their knees turned in and their feet turned out).



Growing Up

Children's legs and feet go through many changes as they grow and develop. It can be confusing for parents to know what is normal and what is not.

- **Flat feet:** Your child may appear to have 'flat feet' or 'rolled-in ankles' for a period of time. This is often a normal part of development. If it is excessive or lasts for a prolonged period of time, it may require treatment.
- **Pigeon toes/knock knees:** The legs and feet undergo various rotational changes in the early years which may result in your child walking with their feet turned out ('duck footed') or turned in ('pigeon toed'). It is also very common for children to go through stages of being knock-kneed or bow-legged. Depending on the child's age, it is usually a part of normal development. If it is severe or prolonged, treatment may be necessary.
- **Growing pains:** The reason for persistent aches and cramps is often due to poor foot and leg posture and may or may not require treatment.
- **Infections:** Tinea, ingrown toenails, smelly feet and warts are common foot complaints in childhood and adolescence.

It is recommended that you seek advice and treatment from a Podiatrist if any of these conditions are present.