

What are flat feet?

Most normal feet have an arch along the inside edge of the foot. A flat foot is when this arch seems absent or reduced when your child is standing. The arches are more obvious when your child is sitting, when the big toe is bent upwards or if your child stands on tiptoe.

Before the age of 3 all children have flat feet, as the arch on the inside of the foot does not begin to develop until after this age.

Even in older children flat feet do not usually cause any problems.

There are different terms that are used to describe flat feet but essentially they all mean the same thing.

They are:

- Pes planus
- Pes valgus
- Pronated feet
- Fallen arches

What causes flat feet?

There are many bones in the feet, which are held together by stretchy bands called ligaments.

Flat feet are usually due to loose or soft ligaments and baby fat between the foot bones.

This causes the arch to flatten (fall) when your child stands up which is why flat feet are sometimes called 'fallen arches'.

Flat feet can occasionally be caused by tight muscles, which is more likely to cause pain.

Will my child need treatment?

If your child does not have any associated problems with their flat feet then they are unlikely to need treatment.

If your child complains of foot, ankle or knee pain, or has poor balance, or poor stamina in walking, then you can speak to your GP or Health Visitor about a referral to see a physiotherapist or podiatrist. The problem can then be assessed and treated if appropriate.