

Pes Planus AKA “Flat Feet”

What are flat feet?

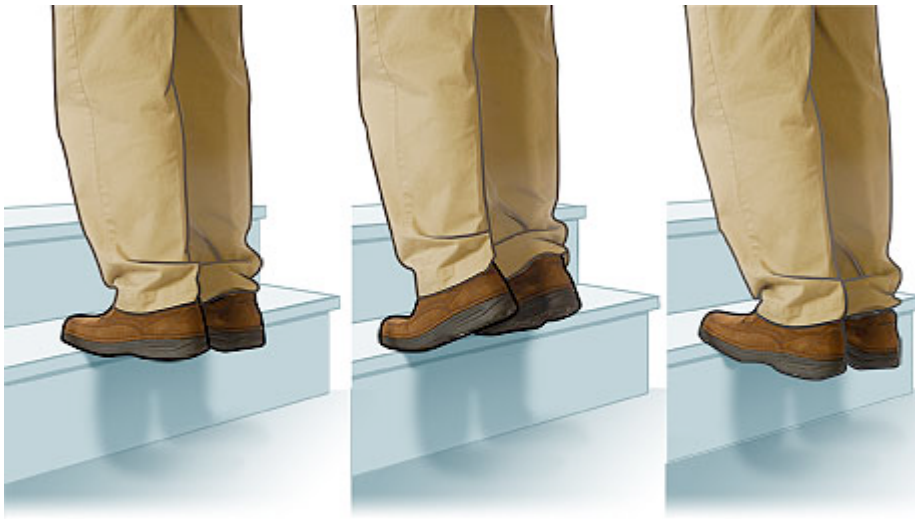
Flexible flat feet is a condition where the arch of the foot collapses upon standing. When the child is off of their feet or standing on their tip-toes the arch comes back. Families are often concerned that that this will lead to permanent disabilities or deformity. Many children are born with flat feet and will outgrow this condition as the get older. A flexible flat foot with normal muscle function and good mobility is considered a variation of normal. If this condition does not resolve by adolescence, children may experience pain or aching along the arch and bottom of the foot. Painful flatfeet should be evaluated by a doctor. Flat feet are often an inherited condition.

How are flat feet diagnosed?

To diagnose flexible flat feet your child’s foot and ankle will be examined to rule out other types of flat feet that would require treatment. This would include flat feet associated with a tight heel cord or a rigid flat foot. Your doctor may also look for callouses on the feet and examine the shoes for abnormal wear. Your child may have radiographs done of their feet to rule out abnormal connections between the bones in the foot called a tarsal coalition.

What is the treatment for flat feet?

Flexible flat feet that are not painful are consider a variation of normal and do not require treatment. Many of these feet will improve as the child grows. If the child has activity related pain or soreness on the foot, ankle, or calf stretching exercises for the calf muscles are often recommended. The diagram below demonstrates a simple Achilles stretching exercise. Flexible flat feet that are symptomatic may also benefit from shoe orthotics.



Answers to commonly asked questions:

1. Will special shoes or braces make my child's flat feet go away?

Most children will outgrow their flat feet as they age. However, some children will have flat feet that persist into adolescence and adulthood. Studies have been performed to see if inserts or orthotics would be beneficial in helping to create an arch, and they were found to make no difference compared to children with no treatment.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2663868?ordinalpos=1&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_DefaultReportPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum

2. Will my child be able to do sports and other recreational activities?

Yes. Flat feet are generally not a disabling condition. You should not limit your child's participation in activities because of their flat feet.

3. Is surgery ever performed for flat feet?

Yes. For adolescents that have persistent flat feet that are symptomatic and not relieved with orthotics, surgery may be considered. Surgery usually involves tendon lengthening in the ankle and cutting a portion of the heel bone or calcaneus to help restore the foot alignment. Usual recovery time before being able to return to sports is 3-4 months.