

## Children's Feet

This leaflet is intended to provide simple practical information about your child's feet.

Most of us are born with trouble free feet, but 3 out of 4 adults have foot problems or deformity.

Did you know that the bones in young people's feet are not fully developed until they are 18-20 years old? A baby is born with 26 bones which are made of soft cartilage and are easily deformed.

Small children go through different phases of development from being flat footed to knock-kneed. Normal walking patterns do not develop properly until the age of about 6 or 7 years. If you are concerned about your child's foot development, contact a podiatrist (Health and Care Professions Council Registered) or another health professional.

## Footwear

By wearing shoes with high heels, slip on styles and not tying up laces, damage can be caused that may not be seen or felt for many years. All those people who say "I wish I had worn better shoes when I was younger" are not just making it up, they are being very honest. Always have feet measured when buying

shoes so that they adapt to the changes in foot shape.

Children's feet should be measured every 3-4 months.

The shoe should be the correct length, width and depth for your child's foot. There should be 1 cm or 0.5 inches between the end of your longest toe and the end of your shoe.

The upper should be soft with no hard seams or ridges and made from a natural fibre such as leather which allows moisture to evaporate.

The shoe needs to hold the foot firmly in place with an adjustable fastening, i.e. laces, straps with buckles or Velcro.

The toe box should be round and deep to give the toes room to move.

The heel should be less than 4 cm or 1.5 inches high, broad and stable.

The shoe needs a firm heel counter that fits snugly around the back of the heel and helps to maintain and stabilise the heel in place as the shoe makes contact with the ground.

Ideally the shoe will have a thick, lightweight, flexible rubber sole of a non-slip material.

Socks should be checked to ensure they are not too tight and ideally

made of cotton or other natural fibres.

For small babies, 'baby-grows' with closed in feet can deform feet if they are too tight. Check them for fit or cut the toes out to prevent pressure.

## Hygiene

By not changing socks or washing feet daily, the ideal breeding ground for fungus is created. Fungal infections can cause soggy and peeling skin between the toes or redness, scaling over the soles of the feet or vesicles (small blisters) can form. Poor hygiene can also cause smelly feet.

Daily washing and thorough drying of the feet (especially in between the toes) together with clean socks every day and the use of an antifungal cream or spray will help to tackle the infection.

## Sweaty feet

This is a common problem associated with teenagers and usually improves by the mid-twenties. The use of natural fibres and leather footwear, daily sock changes and the use of a charcoal based insole will help. Soggy white skin between the toes will improve with the daily application of surgical spirit. Do not use surgical spirits if it 'stings'.

## Verrucae

Verrucae are a common viral infection of the feet. They normally disappear within two years of their own accord. By leaving them alone and letting nature run its course, immunity will be built up and prevent further infections. Should a verruca cause pain or spread rapidly, seek medical advice.

## Nails

Always cut or file nails straight across following the contours of the toe. Never pick at them or cut down the sides. Incorrect cutting of toe nails and wearing tight footwear can lead to involuted or ingrowing toenails. If a child has an infected or very painful in growing toe nail, this condition can be treated with a simple operation to remove the offending side of nail.

You can search for other information leaflets on [www.feetforlife.org](http://www.feetforlife.org)

Please contact the Podiatry Appointment Office  
01803 217712

If you:  
--require further information  
--require this leaflet in a different format

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.



**Torbay and South Devon**  
NHS Foundation Trust

## PATIENT INFORMATION

### Children's and Adolescent's Feet

Department of Podiatry  
and Foot Health