

KIDS AND FLAT FEET

What is a flat foot?

Also known as pes planus, flat feet quite simply refers to the flattening of the arch along the inside of the foot. Flat feet are often quite noticeable given the lack of arch along the foot as seen in the photo below



A child's arch should be formed around the age of 2-3. A podiatrist is the health professional who specialises in assessing whether children's feet are developing normally and what to do about it.

Most children under the age of 6 have functional flat feet as a part of their normal development. A podiatrist can assess whether children's feet are growing well or not. Generally speaking flat feet should not be of concern unless symptoms of pain or discomfort are present. If symptoms are present, an assessment by a podiatrist is a smart thing to arrange.

► Types of flat feet

Pes planus feet can usually be divided into two categories:

- 1 **Rigid** – Because of joint alignment and bone positioning this type sees the arches always appearing stiff and flat whether standing or not
- 2 **Flexible** – Often the common case, and this is due to excessive ligament or muscle flexibility. Often with flexible flat feet the arch appears healthy when not weight bearing but flattens when standing.

► Treatments

- Stretching and strengthening exercises for the foot intrinsic muscles and the bigger muscles of the low leg, ankle and foot
- Activity modification – if pain is aggravated by certain activities or sports then it is best to temporarily stop and consult your Podiatrist
- Correction and Support –
 - ▶ Footwear modifications – ensuring the right shoe with the right amount of arch support and guidance/correction is important and can be done with the help of your Podiatrist
 - ▶ Orthotic devices that take into account rigidity and flexibility and provide the needed correction and arch support. For best advice make an appointment today with your Podiatrist
 - ▶ Surgery – the last resort in most cases and only undertaken in severe cases and where other treatment modalities have failed.