

Intoeing (*Pigeon-toe*)

Intoeing refers to a child's feet turning in when they walk. It may affect one or both legs and often runs in families. Intoeing is common in early childhood and usually improves and corrects as the child grows.

There are three areas in the leg that can cause intoeing:

- foot
- tibia (shinbone)
- hip.

Feet (*metatarsus adductus*)

This is sometimes referred to as a 'hooked foot', where the front part of the foot curves inward (*Figure 1*). It is often caused by the position of the baby inside the womb before they are born. In most children, the feet straighten as the child grows. Some children require stretches or plaster casts to help straighten their feet.

Tibia

Tibial torsion is an inward twist in the tibia, the leg bone between the knee and the ankle (*Figure 2*). These bones usually continue to grow out straighter up until the child is 8 years old.

Hip

Femoral anteversion is the angle of the thigh bone (femur) into the hip socket. This angle affects the amount of rotation movement in the hips. Children who intoe may have more inward turning movement than outward turning movement of the hips (*Figure 3*). As the thigh bones grow this amount of movement becomes more even. This continues to improve up until the child is 12 years old.

Intoeing will correct itself naturally over time and does not usually need treatment with stretches, special shoes, exercises, shoe inserts or night braces. It is suggested that your child avoid sitting positions which encourage in-turning of the hips, legs or feet (*Figure 4*).

However, it is important to consult a paediatric orthopaedic surgeon if intoeing is:

- causing difficulty with activities (e.g. unable to walk or run due to constant tripping and falling)
- causing pain in the legs
- only one side is affected.

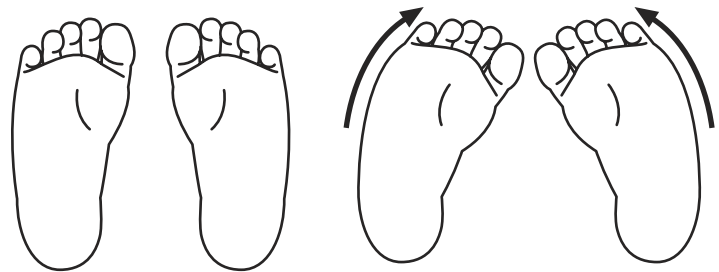


Figure 1. Normal feet (left) and metatarsus adductus (right).

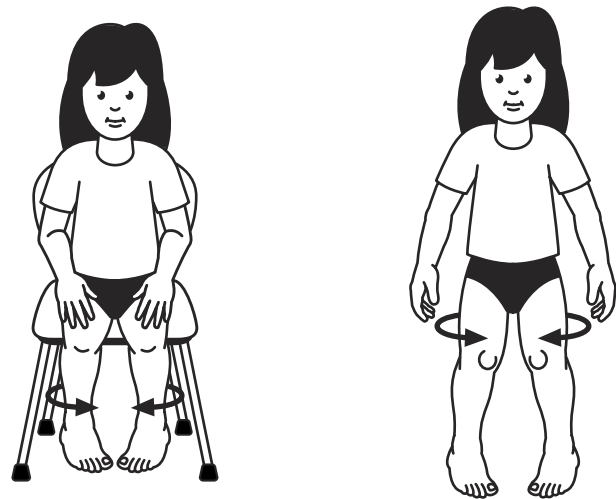


Figure 2. The bone between foot and knee (tibia) twists inward, but the knee still points forward.

Figure 3. The bone between hip and knee (femur) twists inward, causing the knees to turn inward.

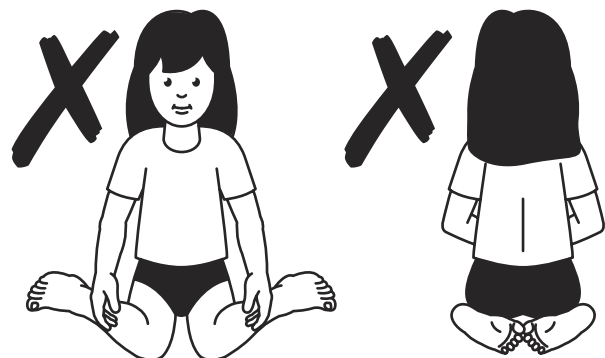


Figure 4. Try to avoid sitting positions which encourage in-turning of the hips, legs or feet.

