

Flat feet in children

ORTHOPAEDIC FACT SHEET 1

Children with flat feet do not have an arch while standing. This is normal in nearly all infants and many young children (Figure 1). In infants, the baby fat pad in the foot hides the developing arch. Young children have flat feet because they are loose jointed.

Flat feet are normally flexible. This means that you can see an arch when the feet are off the ground, or when the child stands on tip-toes (Figure 2).

Most children develop an arch in standing by around age six. However, about one in five children never develop an arch. Flat feet often occur in more than one member of a family. Most adults with flat feet have no long-term problems or pain.

Flexible flat feet in children do not require treatment. Shoes should be comfortable and fit well. Exercises or shoe inserts (arch supports) will not make an arch develop.

Consult your child's doctor if:

- your child has pain
- activity is limited
- only one foot is affected.

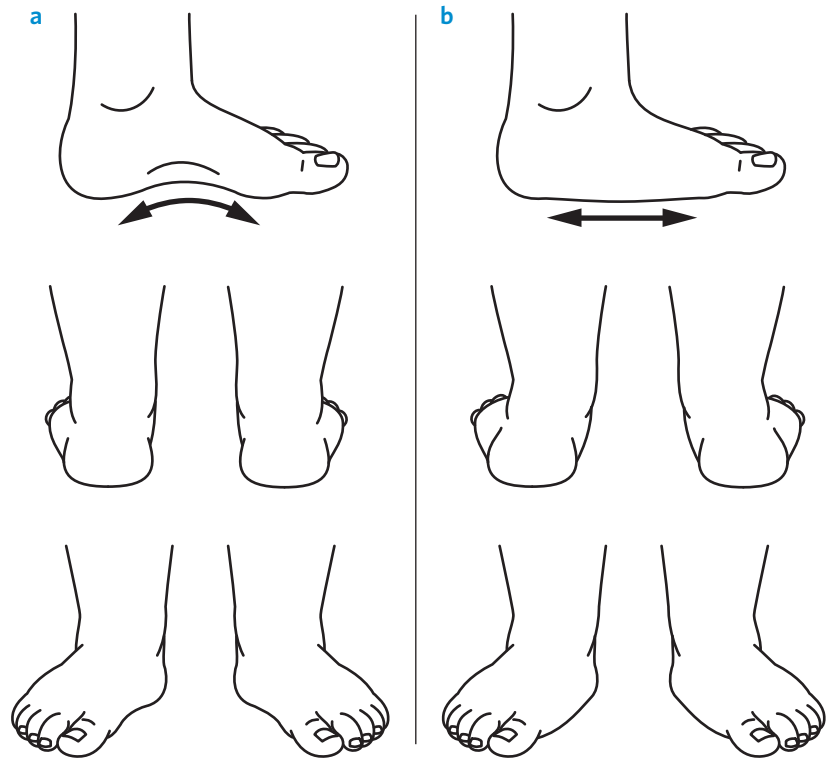


Figure 1. Children's feet may have an arch (a)

Flat feet appear flat with no arch (b)

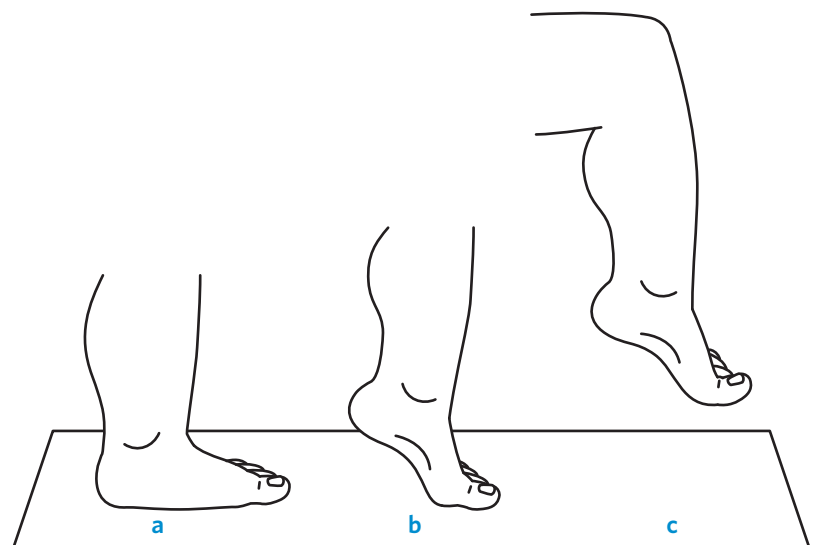


Figure 2. In flexible flat feet (a) an arch is seen when standing on tip-toes (b) and when the feet are off the ground (c)