

# Protecting Children's Health

## Correct Flat Feet Before Adolescence

(NAPSA)—Often left untreated, flat feet in children can lead to serious foot conditions later in life, but research shows that surgery performed before adolescence can be highly successful in correcting the deformity, according to the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS).

Flat feet are difficult to distinguish in young children until the arch develops between ages six and nine. Some eventually outgrow the condition. Those who don't frequently complain of calf pain, cramping or fatigue, and parents notice collapsed arches and ankles that turn inward. Left untreated, childhood flatfoot can lead to arthritis and other foot problems as adults. There are several treatment options, including shoe modifications, orthotic inserts, physical therapy, stretching exercises, anti-inflammatory medications and surgery.

A study co-authored by Darryl Haycock, DPM, FACFAS, evaluated 37 pediatric patients for 18 months following surgery to correct flexible flatfoot. The authors assessed structural correction success using x-rays and physical examinations, and also measured patient-satisfaction levels with the Child Health Questionnaire (CHQ), a self-administered survey designed for children five years and older.

"The CHQ offered an in-depth look at physical function and also gauged the patients' psychological and interpersonal relationships with their parents," says Haycock. "Our results show that just four months following surgery, these patients were functioning as well



**Children with foot pain should be evaluated by a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon.**

as other children regarding physical function, lack of pain and psychological well being."

Haycock notes that the CHQ findings and the excellent clinical outcomes show that flatfoot surgery is a safe and reliable option for pediatric patients who don't respond to conservative treatment. He advises parents to consult a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon if children persistently complain about leg cramps and pain in the calf, foot or arch, or if parents are concerned about flat feet.

"It shouldn't hurt to grow, so if your child has pain, treatment should be initiated," he says. "Flat feet should be corrected before adolescence to restore normal walking and prevent arthritis and other future complications."

For further information about foot and ankle conditions and to locate a podiatric foot and ankle surgeon, contact ACFAS toll-free at 1-888-THE FEET or at [www.acfas.org](http://www.acfas.org).