

# Should Children's Flatfeet Be Treated?

(NAPSA)—Do flatfeet in children naturally correct with age? Or do they require immediate medical attention?

The bottom line for parents, according to James Thomas, DPM, FACFAS, a spokesman for the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, is to watch your child's walking pattern regularly, with and without shoes, to check for flattening arches and see the doctor if the child complains about pain.

"When parents notice flat arches in their children, they often don't know if the problem is serious," Thomas said. "The good news is flat arches are common and treatment usually isn't required unless there is pain."

Thomas explained that in most flatfoot cases, the foot stays flat when standing and the arch returns to normal when sitting or lying down. This condition is known as flexible flatfoot. It can affect infants or may not show up until years later. The condition can occur in one foot or might affect both feet.

Most children with flatfeet have no symptoms but when they occur, symptoms may include:

- Pain, tenderness or cramping in the foot, leg or knee
- Outward tilting of the heel



- Awkwardness or changes in walking
- Difficulty with shoes
- Lower energy levels when participating in physical activities
- Voluntary withdrawal from physical activities.

Although flat arches usually improve over time, if the condition doesn't improve by the age of 10 (the age the arch should be fully developed), a foot and ankle surgeon should be seen for proper diagnosis of the problem and treatment.

Treatment may first include activity modifications or limitations, stretching exercises, shoe orthotics and nonprescription pain relievers. If the child doesn't respond to initial treatment, surgery might be needed to relieve pain and improve foot function.

For further information about flatfeet in children and to locate a foot and ankle surgeon, visit [www.FootPhysicians.com](http://www.FootPhysicians.com).