

For further advice see your podiatrist.

Your local clinic is at:

Tel : _____

Alternatively you may contact the podiatry office,
address is:

Horton Park Centre
Horton Park Avenue
Bradford
BD7 3EG

Email: podiatry.enquiries@bradford.nhs.uk

Tel: 01274 251777

www.bdct.nhs.uk/foothalth

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PODIATRY SERVICES

Babies and children's feet

Patient Information Leaflet

The Foot

Your foot is one of the most complicated parts of your body. It has 26 bones along with ligaments, blood vessels and nerves.

Your baby's feet are made up of soft cartilage which can easily be pushed out of shape by poorly fitting socks and shoes.

Your child's foot grows rapidly during their first year, reaching almost half of their adult foot size. This usually happens in spurts, not at a steady pace. The first year can be very important in the development of your child's feet.

Caring for your baby's feet.

- Wash and dry their feet thoroughly on a daily basis.
- Check and trim their toe nails regularly. Always follow the line of the end of the toe when cutting or filing toe nails.

Never cut down the sides or cut them too short. If you are worried about using nail scissors to cut the toe nails, file them.

As the feet of the very young are soft they are easily misshapen. It is important they are allowed to develop naturally without being distorted in any way.

This development can be helped by:

- keeping their bedclothes loose fitting and light.
- not restricting their feet in socks or baby grows that are too small.
- encouraging your babies to exercise feet by kicking or similar activities to help develop muscles.

Frequently asked questions.

My baby's feet always seem to be cold. Is this normal?

Babies lose heat very rapidly so care should be taken to insulate feet with socks and booties.

What socks are best?

Socks should fit well; natural fibres such as wool or cotton are the best as they allow the foot to breathe. Avoid 100% nylon socks as they will cause your baby's feet to sweat.

How often should I cut my baby's toenails?

Rate of nail growth varies from child to child but length should be checked weekly.

Should I buy a baby walker?

They are not recommended, a baby will walk when it is ready. They have been banned in some Countries, due to the number of accidents they have caused.

When should I buy baby's first pair of shoes?

Your child does not need shoes until they are walking competently. In order for the foot to develop well they should be barefoot for as long as possible.

Do I need to get my child's shoes fitted every time?

Yes, if there are fitters at the shoe shop.

How often should I change my child's shoes?

This depends on the child and their age. Children's feet grow, on average two sizes per year in the first four years of life. To ensure shoes fit properly they should be checked every eight weeks. (See Measuring my child's feet and Fitting my child's shoes)

Common worries

Curly toes or overlapping toes

One of the most common problems podiatrists see in babies and young children is curly and overlapping toes. These can correct themselves when your baby starts to walk.

In toeing

In toeing is very common in toddlers, often called 'pigeon toed'. In most cases this corrects itself as your baby becomes a more confident walker. As long as your baby is not in pain or tripping over a lot it does not require any treatment.

Toe walking

Toe walking happens in babies and young children, especially in those just learning to walk. This should correct itself. If it doesn't and there is limited movement at the ankle some treatment may be required.

Bow legs

Bowing is a part of development. Babies are born with bow legs and they straighten of their own accord. Toddlers may also be knock-kneed from age three to about age six. Again this is part of their development.

Nail problems

Babies toenails are often very soft and grow very slowly. This is normal and nails will become stronger as baby grows and becomes more active.

If you are concerned about any part of your child's development, a problem seems persistent or if your child appears to be in pain, talk to your health visitor or doctor who may refer you to see a podiatrist.

Starting to walk

Each child is unique and will develop in their own time. Your child will begin to walk at around 10 to 18 months of age.

When your child first begins to walk, shoes are not necessary indoors. Going barefoot allows the foot to develop strength and the 'grasping' action of toes.

Your baby's feet will appear flat as children are born with a fatty pad in the arch area. The foot and leg muscles are not developed enough to support their arches when they first stand. The arch does not begin to develop until the age of two, and will not be fully developed until around age six.

First shoes

- Once walking is established your baby is ready for their first pair of shoes.
- Make sure their feet are measured by a trained professional.
- Feet should be measured every two to four months to allow room for feet to grow.
- Choose shoes with natural linings and socks with a high natural fibre content to allow feet to breathe.
- Make sure shoes have some kind of fastening. Hook and loop or Velcro fastenings may be easier than buckles and laces. Do not force your child's feet in and out of shoes without unfastening them.

Footwear

Baby grows and sleep suits

Make sure the foot part is long enough and does not squeeze the foot.

Tights and socks

Should fit at the heel and the length at the toes should be checked regularly.

Pram shoes

Should only be worn for special occasions. They are difficult to size. The best way to keep the feet warm is with socks or booties.

Bootees

Are a good way to keep the feet warm. Make sure they are big enough and if they are knitted ensure the weave does not get tight around the toes and stop the circulation.

Shoes for early walkers and toddlers

A young child's foot is triangular in shape unlike an adult's foot which is rectangular. Shoes should be fitted by a trained professional and should allow the foot to function normally.

School shoes

Again these should be fitted by a trained professional. The toe area should be foot shaped and deep enough for the toes to move freely. They should fit snugly around the heel, have a heel height of no more than 1.5cm and have some form of fastening.

Plimsolls

It is hard to measure feet for plimsolls and they do not come in half sizes. The materials they are made from encourage sweating and then athlete's foot. Many plimsolls are slip on, which can encourage toe deformity.