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HEALTHY FEET FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

Overdoing Sports Can Lead to Overuse Injuries for Kids

Fall is not only "back to school" season for your children—it is also the time when school sports teams kick into high gear. Today many children are involved in several sports each season, and it is not uncommon for a child to attend practices for two or more different sports on the same day.

If your children are involved in sports activities—especially those that are hard on their feet such as soccer, basketball, football and track—you should be on the lookout for overuse injuries. The bones, ligaments and tendons in children's feet are not yet fully developed, and damage can occur when they are stressed from hours of sports participation.

OVERUSE INJURIES CAN INCLUDE:

- ▶ **Achilles tendonitis**, an inflammation of the tendon connecting the heel bone to the calf muscle.
- ▶ **Calcaneal apophysitis**, an inflammation of the back of the heel at the growth plate due to muscle strain and repetitive stress.
- ▶ **Plantar fasciitis**, an inflammation of the band of tissue that runs along the bottom of the foot from the heel to the toes.
- ▶ **Stress fractures** or hairline breaks resulting from repeated stress on the bone.
- ▶ **Tendo-Achilles bursitis**, an inflammation of the fluid-filled sac located between the Achilles tendon and the heel bone.

Some children insist on continuing to play their sport even when they are in pain. Parents should note, foot or ankle pain in children is never normal. Allowing them to play through the pain with an injury can result in foot and ankle problems that may affect your child well into adulthood.

As a reference, any pain that lasts more than a few days or is severe enough to limit the child's walking should be evaluated in our office.



Help Your Child Avoid Overuse Injuries

- Never allow a child to use hand-me-down shoes.
- Ensure that shoes are well-constructed and support the foot adequately. Have them professionally fitted.
- Limit wearing of cleated shoes to the time actually spent on the field. These shoes are not supportive, and cleats may cause increased pressure on soles of the feet.
- Avoid activities that are beyond your child's ability.
- If your child is overweight, help him or her shed pounds. Extra weight puts additional stress on the feet.

Shopping Tips for Children's Shoes

Back-to-school shoes shouldn't hurt!

Keep these tips in mind when shopping for your kids' shoes this fall:

- Examine the shoe closely. It should have a firm heel counter, adequate insole cushioning and a built-in arch. It should also be flexible enough to bend where the foot bends—at the ball of the foot, not at the middle of the shoe.
- Size your child's foot while standing, with full weight bearing.
- Measure both feet. If they are two different sizes, choose shoes that fit the larger foot best.
- Check for about one half-inch of space (or a thumb's width) between the tip of the toes and the end of the shoe. Your child should be able to comfortably wiggle his or her toes in the shoe.
- Let your child walk around the store for more than just a few minutes wearing the shoe and a normal type of sock. Ask if there are any pressure spots in the shoe and feel the inside.
- Examine where the inside stitching hits the foot. Look for signs of irritation on the foot after the shoe is worn.
- Make sure the shoe does not slip off at the heel.



Do Arches Really Fall?

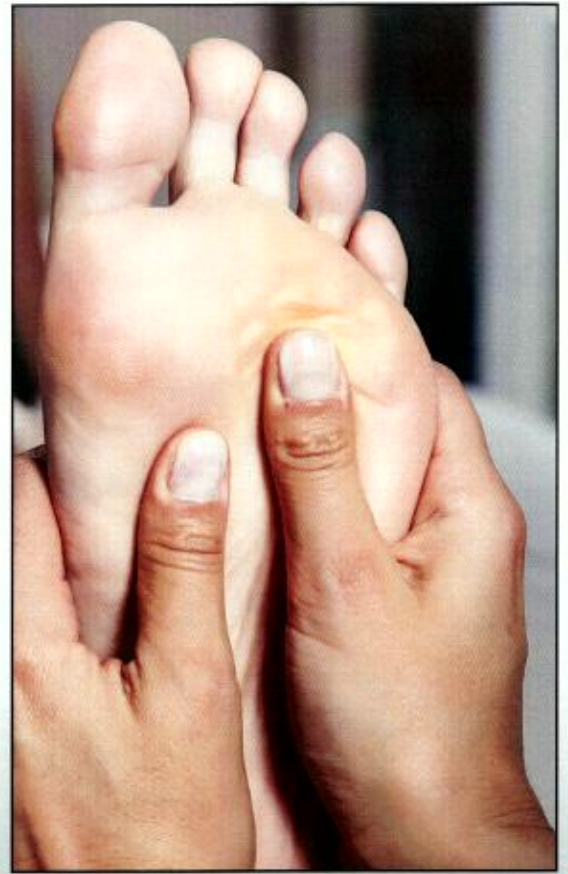
Many adults complain of having painful feet due to “fallen arches,” but is it true that years of wear and tear on the feet can actually cause arches to flatten over time?

Flatfoot in adults is a complex disorder with varying symptoms and degrees of severity. Although several types of flatfoot exist, they all have one characteristic in common—partial or total collapse of the arch.

Adult flexible flatfoot, one of the most common types of flatfoot, is the clinical condition often referred to as “fallen arches.” Adult flexible flatfoot typically begins in childhood or adolescence and continues into adulthood. The condition usually occurs in both feet and generally progresses in severity throughout the adult years. As the deformity worsens, soft tissues (tendons and ligaments) of the arch may stretch or tear and can become inflamed, causing pain.

Symptoms that often accompany adult flexible flatfoot include pain in the heel, arch, ankle or along the outside of the foot; turned-in ankle; pain associated with a shin splint and general weakness/fatigue in the foot or leg.

If you suffer from any of these painful symptoms, call our office to schedule an appointment for a definitive diagnosis and treatment. Many treatment options are available to relieve the painful symptoms of adult flexible flatfoot and to improve foot function. We can recommend a treatment course based on the severity of your condition, your age, your activity level and other factors.



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